FROM INACTION TO INTERVENTION: INDIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE OF REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT (NEPAL, SRI LANKA AND MYANMAR, 1950s-2000s)

by

Constantino H. Xavier

A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Washington, D.C.

July, 2016

ABSTRACT

When, why and how does India get involved when one of its neighbors faces a regime crisis? And why does India in some cases engage authoritarian governments, while in others it undermines them and forces their democratization? To explain such variation, the dissertation examines Indian response to different regime crises in the three neighboring countries of Nepal, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and Myanmar (Burma), across three time periods (1950s-60s, 1980s, 2000s).

By reconstructing policy debates in the government, based on declassified materials and interviews with decision-makers, the nine case studies suggest that India's posture, degree and direction of involvement in each regional crisis was *determined* by 1) The relative strength and attitude towards India of the neighboring regime and of any credible alternative (*dispensation*), 2) The risk of the neighboring state's crisis or internal conflict spilling over into India, affecting its domestic security (*order*); and 3) The neighboring regime's foreign policy and security alignment, and the consequent risk of involvement by extra-regional powers at the expense of India (*geopolitics*).

Beyond such strategic assessments, however, this dissertation goes on to demonstrate that India's strategic culture of crisis response and involvement in the region is also shaped by its liberal democratic identity. Indian decision-makers recognize that different regime types bring specific dividends and disadvantages. When Indians express their principled support for democracy abroad, they do so for *causal* reasons, associating liberal regimes with greater stability and security, based on India's own experience since 1947. This translates into a cost-benefit dilemma in Indian strategic assessments: 1) In the short term,

liberal regimes will traverse a risky infant phase of instability that can be detrimental to India, but then gradually increase their beneficial effects as they mature, in the long term; and 2) Conversely, in the short term, infant illiberal (and especially autocratic) regimes will often reinstitute order and state cohesion that benefits India, but are then bound to gradually increase their detrimental impact on India, especially as they face growing internal dissent and instability, in the long term.

India's strategic culture of crisis response and involvement can thus be characterized as a manifestation of *realpolitik* at its best, seeking to preserve and maximize democratic India's security in the region. The "Indian way" of foreign policy is an expression of a distinct Indian realism, which is based on the particular colonial history, democratic identity, limited capability, and geographic location of its state.

Ph.D. Committee

Adviser:

- Dr. Walter K. Andersen, Director, South Asian Studies, Johns Hopkins/SAIS

Chair:

- Professor Eliot A. Cohen, Director, Strategic Studies, Johns Hopkins/SAIS

Readers:

- Professor Jakub Grygiel, Global Theory & History, Johns Hopkins/SAIS

- Dr. Stephen P. Cohen, Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

- Dr. Srinath Raghavan, King's College London, and Center for Policy Research, India

Those who treat politics and morals apart will never understand anything of either.[1]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (1762)

[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile: or, On education (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 235.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

AFPFL   Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League

AIADMK   All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

BJP   Bharatiya Janata Pary (India)

CIA   Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

CPN (M)   Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre)

CPN-UML   Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)

CPI-ML   Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist)

DMK   Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

EAM   External Affairs Minister (Government of India)

EPRLF   Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front

EROS   Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students

EU   European Union

FM   Foreign Minister

FP   Federal Party (Sri Lanka)

FS   Foreign Secretary (Government of India)

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

IB   Intelligence Bureau (Government of India)

INC	Indian National Congress
IR	International Relations (discipline)
JD	Janata Dal (India)
JS	Joint Secretary (Government of India)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
NAI	National Archives of India
NC	Nepali Congress
NLD	National League for Democracy (Myanmar)
NSC	National Security Council (United States)
NSCN	Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland
NZOP	Nepal Zone of Peace
PM	Prime Minister
PLA	People's Liberation Army (China)
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing (Government of India)
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council

SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TELO	Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front (Sri Lanka)
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNP	United National Party (Sri Lanka)
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

INTRODUCTION

When, why and how does India get involved when one of its neighbors faces a regime crisis? And why does India in some cases engage authoritarian governments, while in others it undermines them and force their democratization? The dissertation is driven by these central questions and seeks to explain the puzzling variation in India's crises responses, which fluctuate between inaction and intervention, on the one hand, and between engagement and coercion, on the other hand.

This introduction is divided in five sections. First, it sets out the dissertation's research puzzle and addresses the insufficiencies in existing explanations. The second section proceeds to present the methodology, case selection, questions and hypotheses, as well as the sources employed. The third section then examines the dissertation's relevance to the further study and also practice of Indian foreign policy. The fourth section discusses the dissertation's theoretical context and contribution to the discipline of International Relations. The introduction concludes with an overview on the dissertation's structure.

1. Research puzzle: variation in degree and direction of involvement

Table 1 below offers an historical overview of all types of regime crises in India's neighboring countries with a brief event summary and a broad description of India's response. The term "regime crisis" is employed in a broad way to encompass a) formal

coups, both successful and failed, and b) periods of unusual unrest or conflict. India's response (*posture*) to each crisis, varies in two significant ways:

a) Degree of involvement: First, in terms of the depth of its involvement (*degree*), India's posture varies along a spectrum, from passive inaction up to military intervention. Beyond these two extremes, since 1947 the Indian government has also employed a variety of intermediary modes of involvement to either engage or coerce sovereign governments. For example, India used diplomatic, intelligence and other instruments to coerce Nepal into a regime change in 1950; to annex the Kingdom of Sikkim in 1974-5; and to facilitate conflict resolution in Sri Lanka in the 1980s. It also used military force to occupy Portuguese India in 1961, to invade East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971, and to support the Maldivian government in 1988. What explains this variation in intensity and instruments of involvement?

b) Direction of involvement: Second, in terms of the orientation of involvement (*direction*), India's posture seems to reflect a puzzling attitude of indifference towards different systems of government (regime types), as it has variably engaged and coerced both democracies and autocracies. For example, in 1948, India offered crucial military assistance for the Burmese democratic government to defeat an insurrection, but after the Army coup of 1962 it became the first country to recognize the new military regime. Since the 1970s, it has variably engaged or coerced different military regimes and democratic governments in Bangladesh. In the Maldives, India sided with an autocratic regime for several decades, but in 2012-13 flexed its diplomatic muscles after a soft coup against the first democratically elected Prime Minister. Does regime type affect India's

involvement? What explains this supposed neglect for different regimes in the neighborhood?

<u>Research questions</u>

These two puzzles above drive the dissertation's two main research questions:

1. What factors explain the varying degree and direction of India's regional involvement? In terms of *degree*, why does India remain passive in some crises, refusing to take any action, while in other crises it actively intervenes, for example with military force?

2. And in terms of *direction*, why does India sometimes engage authoritarian regimes, while in others it coerces them and supports democratic and liberal forces?

Table 1: Regime crises in South Asia and Indian responses (1947-2012)

Dates/ Period	Country/ Region	Event summary	Indian action
1947	Nepal	Nepalese democrats found the Nepali National Congress and execute protest and violent actions against the Rana autocracy. Nehru refuses to provide assistance.	Inaction (indirect support for autocracy).
1948-...	Myanmar	Variety of armed ethnic and/or Communist insurgencies in the Northern and Eastern regions (e.g. Karen, Kachin, CPB, Wa, Shan) seeking greater autonomy, independence or regime change.	Military assistance for democracy.
1949 (Feb-Aug)	Sikkim	Sikkim State Congress agitation against King for democratization. Indian government intervenes with military and takes over administration, blocking democratization. Leads to India-Sikkim Treaty of Dec1950.	Military intervention to support autocracy.
1949-50	Xinjiang (China)	PLA military offensive on Xinjiang, ends Second East Turkestan Republic. Refugee exodus by separatists, some into India.	-
1950 (Nov)	Nepal	King Tribhuvan defects, pro-democracy rebellion led by Nepali Congress against autocratic rule of the Rana succeeds in Feb1951. Beginning of democratization period.	Coercion against autocracy, support for democratization.
1950 (Jan-Mar)	Pakistan	Riots between Hindus and Muslims, leading to hundreds of thousands of refugees crossing between East Pakistan and West Bengal/India. Military escalation. Ends with Nehru-Liaqat Pact, April 8.	-
1951 (Mar)	Pakistan	Attempted Army coup against PM Liaquat Ali Khan by Maj Gen Akbar Khan with Soviet support. Also known as Rawalpindi Consipracy. Failed.	-
1952 (Jan)	Nepal	A rebel faction of the Nepal Congress led by I K Singh, with support of the Home Guard (Raksha Dal), seeks to overthrow the government. Failure, ends with Singh's exile into Tibet.	Military assistance to support democracy.
1956	Sri Lanka	The SLFP is elected to government, under SWRD Bandaranaike, and institutes a "Sinhala Only" language act that leads to mass protests by alienated Tamil minority. 1958 (May) first major post-independence ethnic riots.	Engagement of illiberal democracy.
1958 (Sept)	Myanmar	Coerced by the military, PM U Nu accedes to military rule and caretaker govt for six months, approved by parliament and subsequently extended for 12 more months. Soft coup, signals weakening/end of civilian-led democratization period.	Engagement of military caretaker government.
1958 (Oct)	Pakistan	Martial law declared by Gen. I. Mirza, followed by military coup by Gen. Ayub Khan. End of civilian-led democratization period.	-
1959 (Mar)	Tibet (China)	Protests, uprising against PLA / authoritarian PRC regime. Tibetans and Dalai Lama take refuge in India.	-

1960 (Dec)	**Nepal**	King Mahendra and military dismiss democratic government of B. P. Koirala. NC persecuted, takes refuge in India, from where it stages an armed rebellion in 1961-62.	Engagement of new autocratic regime.
1961	**Goa (Portugal)**	Military occupation of Portuguese colony under authoritarian rule of A. Salazar. Goan freedom movement based in India.	Military intervention against colonial regime.
1962 (Jan)	**Sri Lanka**	Attempted Army coup by mostly "pro-Western" Christian officers.	-
1962 (Mar)	**Myanmar**	Military coup against elected Prime Minister U Nu. End of democratization process, imprisonment or exile of government and other party member. Beginning of military autocracy.	Engagement of new autocratic regime.
1971	**Sri Lanka**	JVP armed Maoist insurgency operations against government and limited control of South / Central provinces.	Military assistance to support democracy.
1971	**Bangladesh (Pakistan)**	Bangladesh independence movement and partial insurgency. Massive military repression and millions of Bengalis cross border to take refuge in India.	Military intervention to support separatism and liberalization.
1973 (Apr)	**Sikkim**	Sikkim Congress Party-led protests against authoritarian monarchy, assisted by India (1975: integration).	Coercion against autocracy, support fro democratization.
1973 (Jul)	**Afghanistan**	Daoud coup against King Shah, ends democratization process.	Engagement and support for autocracy.
1975	**Bangladesh**	President Sheikh Mujibur Rehman assassinated and, after a succession of coups and counter-coups, Gen. Ziaur Rahman takes informal charge, then becoming President in 1976.	Engagement of military autocracy.
1977 (Jul)	**Pakistan**	Military coup against Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, followed by military rule under Zia ul-Haq and opposition by Movement for Restoration of Democracy (1981-83).	-
1977-97	**Bangladesh**	Low-intensity Shanti Bahini insurgency by non-Muslim ethnic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts against Bangladesh army and security forces. End with Dec1997 peace accord.	Indian covert support and mediation.
1978-79	**Afghanistan**	PDPA coup against Daoud. Beginning of pro-USSR socialist government.	-
1979-92	**Afghanistan**	Civil war with Afghan mujahedeen insurgency against Soviet-sponsored PDPA regime. Stymies after National Reconciliation attempts under Najibullah and beginning of Soviet withdrawal in 1986.	Engagement of autocracy.
1982 (Mar)	**Bangladesh**	Military coup against elected President Sattar by Gen. Ershad.	Engagement of military autocracy.
1983-87 (Jun)	**Sri Lanka**	After anti-Tamil "Black July" riots in 1983, Eelam War 1 between Colombo and LTTE Tamil insurgents. Culminates in 1987 with Jaffna siege, Indian mediation and military coercion.	Coercive mediation and military intervention against democracy (illiberal)
1988 (Aug)	**Myanmar**	Pro-democracy (888 movement) protests followed by military coup, repression and continued rule after the 1990 elections are declared invalid.	Coercion against autocracy, support fro democratization.
1988 (Nov)	**Maldives**	Military coup (unknown intentions, failed) against President Gayoom. India sends in	Military intervention to support

		military to support him.	autocracy.
1989 (Mar)	**Tibet (China)**	Tibetan protests, uprising against PLA and PRC rule.	-
1990	**Bhutan**	Nepalese minority protests against ethnic discrimination. Violent crackdown by monarchy.	-
1990 (Feb)	**Nepal**	Multi-party Jan Andolaan movement, succeeds in pressuring King to democratic reforms and of absolutist rule.	Coercive support for democratization.
1990-1995	**Sri Lanka**	Eelam War II between Colombo and LTTE Tamil separatists, ends with negotiation round in 1994 that fails in early 1995.	-
1994-2001	**Afghanistan**	Taliban extremist expansion, fall of Kabul and resistance by Northern Alliance.	Military assistance for rebel faction.
1995-2001	**Sri Lanka**	Eelam War III between Colombo and LTTE Tamil separatists. Major LTTE offensive and capture of Elephant Pass in 2000. Ends with Norway-mediated peace talks in 2001-2002.	Inaction.
1996-2005	**Nepal**	Maoist armed insurgency against constitutional monarchy.	Engagement.
1999 (Oct)	**Pakistan**	Military coup against democratic government of PM Nawaz Sharif. Beginning of military rule by Gen. P. Musharraf.	-
2001-...	**Afghanistan**	Taliban insurgency against democratic regime backed by US and ISAF.	Support for democratization.
2005 (Feb)	**Nepal**	After King suspends parliament, enforces martial law, pro-democracy Jan Andolaan II protests lead to end of monarchy and beginning of political liberalization under republican regime.	Coercion against autocracy, support for democratization.
2007 (Jan)	**Bangladesh**	Military pressure (soft coup) against caretaker government, which is forced to resign.	
2007 (Sept)	**Myanmar**	"Saffron revolution": pro-democracy protests, violent crackdown by military regime.	Engagement of military autocracy.
2008 (Mar)	**Tibet (China)**	Protests in Tibet (and India), Lhasa uprising against PLA/PRC rule.	-
2009	**Sri Lanka**	Eelam War IV between Colombo and LTTE separatist. Final Army offensive massive and decisive military victory with substantial civilian casualties.	Engagement, military assistance of democracy (illiberal regime).
2012 (Feb)	**Maldives**	Opposition coup against elected President Nasheed, forcing him to resign. After external pressure, new elections held in 2013.	

Six unsatisfactory explanations

What factors explain India's puzzling variation in terms of degree and direction of involvement in the neighborhood? Chapter 1 offers a detailed overview of the literature on India's strategic culture in the neighborhood, and sets out the reason for the unusually sparse scholarship on the subject. The following five explanations, usually invoked when explaining India's regional policies, are not able to account for the variation.

1. Liberal values: A value-based explanation would forward that India's involvement is determined by its democratic nature and support for liberal forces and, conversely, by its hostility towards authoritarian or illiberal forces. While in several cases, particularly in Nepal (1950-51, 1990, 2006), in Sri Lanka (1980s), and in Burma (1948, 1988) India supported democratization or liberal reforms, in other cases it engaged authoritarian or illiberal regimes, including in Nepal (1960), in Sri Lanka (2009) and in Burma/Myanmar (1962, 2007). This exposes the limits of a strictly liberal explanation: the regime type of its neighboring states does not determine democratic India's posture.

2. Capability: All other factors held constant, including changes in strategic thinking, the degree of India's involvement could be based on its relative power. This would predict a gradual rise in coercive diplomacy and military interventionism in the region, according to the widely held assumption that India's capabilities have increased since 1947. The scholarship of the early 1990s thus described India's intense interventionism in the 1980s (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal) as a reflection of its new capabilities and rising power. However, this fails to explain India's recessed posture of the 2000s (engagement in Myanmar and Sri Lanka), as it refrained from using military force since withdrawing from Sri Lanka, in 1990.

3. Global environment: This explanation would posit that India's intensity of coercive involvement in the neighborhood is related to its relative power in the international system. Accordingly, India's coercive postures in the 1970s (Bangladesh 1971, Sikkim 1974-5) would have been driven by its quasi-alliance with the Soviet Union. Similarly, the recessed postures of the 2000s would reflect its relative weakness given American unipolarity and the rise of China after the Cold War. Such a structural explanation fails to explain, however, why India's peak intensity of involvement, in the late 1980s, coincided with its greatest moment of vulnerability, as the Soviet Union declined.

4. Non-interference: The principle of non-interference, advocated by India since independence and institutionalized by a tripartite agreement with China and Burma, in 1954, offers the weakest explanation. Officials often articulate this as India's default policy: to reflexively engage and work with all neighboring governments under any circumstances and whichever their political system. However, while non-interference may be the government's preferred policy in *principle*, and possibly also moderate its propensity to interfere, India's rich and long *practice* of involvement in the internal affairs of its sovereign neighbors suggests that this norm does not determine its posture.

5. Leadership: Does a rise in Indian neighborhood involvement reflect the particular approaches and worldviews of its leaders? Personality-based explanations are popular, and suggest that "idealist" J. Nehru would have favored non-interference in the 1950s, which is contradicted by his practice in Nepal, where he engineered a regime change in 1950-51 and thereafter micromanaged the democratization of the Himalayan kingdom. Similarly, despite his "neighborhood first" policy to engage all neighboring governments,

in 2015 PM N. Modi supported an informal trade blockade to coerce Nepal's democratic government to amend the country's new constitution.

6. Ideology: Does the ideology of different political parties, in particular of the Indian National Congress (INC, center-left) or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, center-right), determine the government's posture, degree and intensity of involvement in the neighborhood? Given electoral competition, this explanation is also widely popular, but does not hold up to closer scrutiny: despite condemning it during his electoral campaign of 1989, PM. V. P. Singh continued the incumbent's coercive approach to Nepal, in 1990. Similarly, India's approaches to Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar reflect continuity despite the change in government, from a BJP to an INC coalition, in 2004. In fact, the secret channel of dialogue with the Nepalese Maoist insurgents was first established by India's allegedly "Hindu nationalist" government of PM A. B. Vajpayee and his supposedly "hawkish" National Security Adviser, B. Mishra.

The shortcomings of these six explanations indicate that India's posture, degree and intensity of involvement in neighboring states requires a more nuanced approach.

2. Methodology

To understand the factors that drive India's posture, degree and intensity of involvement, this dissertation adopts a case study approach, reconstructing the decision-making process behind a particular response. The focus is, therefore, exclusively on the Indian government, both on its political leadership and its various organizations, with particular emphasis on the Ministry of External Affairs and its Foreign Service cadre. How do

Indian leaders and officials perceive the neighboring regime crises, and what strategic assessments influence India's posture, degree and intensity of involvement?

<u>Case selection</u>

Returning to Table 1 above, three countries, with three crises events each, are chosen across three time periods. Table 2 below lists these cases:

Table 2: Case selection (country, crisis type and period)

	Nepal	**Ceylon/Sri Lanka**	**Burma/Myanmar**
1950s-60s	1960 (engagement of royal autocracy)	1956 (engagement illiberal regime)	1962 (engagement of military regime)
1980s	1990 (coercion against royal autocracy)	1987 (coercion illiberal regime)	1988 (coercion against military regime)
2000s	2006 (coercion against royal autocracy)	2009 (engagement illiberal regime)	2007 (engagement of military regime)

These cases specifically reflect India's puzzling variance, for example:

1. Nepal: Why did India engage the absolutist royal regime after the 1960 coup, but then impose a trade blockade and coerce the Kingdom into a democratic regime change, in 1990?

2. Sri Lanka: Why did India engage the Sri Lankan government, in 2009, supporting it to defeat the Tamil insurgency, when in the 1980s it had coerced Colombo to stop a military offensive and accept its mediation and peacekeeping force?

3. Myanmar: Why did India come out in full support of the Burmese pro-democracy uprising led by A. S. Suu Kyi, in 1988, but then reconciled with the autocratic military junta in the 1990s and engaged it when a similar protest bloodied the streets of Rangoon, in 2007?

Selection criteria

To control for time, and also to identify possible lines of continuity and change in decision-making processes, four factors were used as criteria in case selection:

1) Salience: In all three countries, crises affected Indian security stakes, which is expected to have drawn the attention of its decision-makers: a) Nepal: Open border, proximity to China/Tibet, close political contacts between political party elites, cross-border links between Maoist and Naxal insurgents in the 2000s, Chinese presence; b) Sri Lanka: cross-border Tamil solidarity and domestic politics; risk of spillover insurgency/separatism, geopolitical importance in the Indian Ocean, Western/Chinese competition; c) Myanmar: cross-border insurgency, illegal migration and trafficking, geopolitical link to Southeast Asia, rising Chinese influence.

2) Type: The nature of the specific crises in each of the three countries is different. a) Nepal: Each of the regime crises (1960, 1990, 2006) features a standoff between illiberal forces favoring absolutist or authoritarian monarchical rule, and liberal forces favoring a

11

multi-party and more inclusive democracy; b) Sri Lanka: Each of the crises periods (1956, 1987, 2009) features a standoff between illiberal forces favoring political or military enforcement of a unitary and centralized state based on ethnic majoritarianism (whether Sinhala or Tamil), and liberal forces favoring peaceful conflict resolution through a federal and decentralized state based on ethnic pluralism. c) Myanmar: Each of the regime crises (1962, 1988, 2007) features a standoff between illiberal forces favoring military autocracy based on centralized or ethno-nationalist Burmese majoritarianism, and liberal forces favoring multi-party democratic rule and decentralization.

3) Location: To control for India's coercive capacity, these three countries reflect different geographic locations and strategic contexts. a) Nepal: landlocked, under-developed and small, with closest proximity and highest Indian capacity of involvement; b) Sri Lanka: insular, relatively wealthy and small, close proximity but medium capacity for Indian involvement; c) Myanmar: inter-regional situation, linking South and Southeast Asia, large and mostly disconnected from the subcontinent, with very limited capacity for Indian involvement.

4) Time: Distribution across three specific periods in India's political and foreign policy history: a) Late 1950s/early 1960s: the final phase of PM J. Nehru's leadership and his non-aligned initiatives. Despite an increasingly strained relation with China, India resists becoming entangled in early Cold War U.S.-Soviet Union rivalry. Democratic and liberal experiments falter across the region, succumbing to military autocracies and ethno-nationalist majoritarianism; b) 1980s: India's youngest-ever PM R. Gandhi experiments with economic reforms and pursues an assertive foreign policy based on a comfortable support base. As the Soviet ally declines, India pursues an interventionist policy in the

region, despite rising internal violence and secessionism; c) 2000s: India's economic reforms in full swing with unprecedented growth rates and its nuclear status formally recognized, PM M. Singh diversifies the country's security partnerships, with an unprecedented rapprochement to the United States and persistent tensions with China.

Case study questions and hypotheses

1. Why was India more interventionist and coercive during neighborhood crises in the 1980s than either in the 1950s/60s or 2000s? What explains such variation in degree of involvement?

In the first phase, as liberal experiments in Burma, Nepal and Sri Lanka faltered between 1956 and 1962, India reacted with concern but focused on engagement: it swiftly normalized relations with Burma's military autocracy after the 1962 coup, with the absolutist King of Nepal after his 1960 coup, and refrained from countering Ceylon's creeping discriminatory policies against the Tamil minority.

This contrasts with the second phase, in the 1980s, when India assumed a far more involved and coercive posture: it openly condemned military rule in Burma, in 1988; it instituted a trade blockade against landlocked Nepal in 1990; and it coerced and militarily enforced a peace agreement in Sri Lanka in 1987.

Finally, in the 2000s, India seems to have reverted to mixed posture: it engaged Myanmar's military junta during the pro-democracy "saffron revolution" in 2007; it also supported the Sri Lankan government in its military offensive against the Tamil separatists, in 2009; and in Nepal it switched from engaging to coercing the Nepalese King into a democratic regime change, in 2006.

The hypothesis explored in this dissertation suggests that the *degree* of involvement may depend on the following strategic assessments:

a) Preserve political access/influence: assessment of how the crisis outcome or continuation may reduce or increase India's access to and influence over the leadership in the neighboring state. Policy question: How may the internal balance of power change and, given historical experience and current intelligence, what actor is most likely to establish good relations with India? Best-case scenario: influence over a regime with a familiar leadership that is cooperative/pliant to Indian concerns. Worst-case scenario: no access to a new regime that is uncooperative/hostile, deriving its legitimacy from an anti-India agenda.

b) Strengthen domestic security: assessment of how the crisis outcome or continuation may lead to new security threats (cross-border instability, refugee influx, safe havens for separatist or insurgent groups) or conversely to increased territorial control and stability. Policy question: Will the new balance of power in the neighboring state increase or decrease India's capability to ensure security, control and stability in its territory, in particular in border areas? Best-case scenario: a strong neighboring state that supports India in combating security threats. Worst-case scenario: a weak, neighboring state that supports organizations that threaten India's domestic security.

c) Impede extra-regional presence: the assessed risk that the crisis outcome or continuation leads to a stronger political, economic or military presence by an extra-regional or rival power in the respective neighboring state (e.g. Pakistan, China, USA). Policy question: Is any rival/outside power using the crisis to increase its presence in the crisis state and encroach on India's regional space? Best-case scenario: Rival/outside power has no significant

14

presence or it is reduced. Worst case-scenario: Presence expands and crisis state falls under control of rival/outside power.

2. Even if they are not determinant (sufficient), do liberal and democratic concerns about regime type influence India's assessments and posture during regional regime crises? What explains variation in its direction of involvement?

While strategic and security objectives may determine India's posture during regional crises in the 1950s-60s, 1980s and 2000s, as set out above, the country's exceptional democratic regime warrants a closer examination of the link between its liberal domestic tradition and its foreign policy. The Nehruvian legacy looms large, if only at the rhetorical and global level, with India supporting anti-colonial freedom struggles, denouncing racial discrimination and assisting nascent post-colonial democracies. Similarly, India's successful experience as a liberal democracy may have also influenced its thinking on relations with neighboring regimes. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Condemnation of South Africa's apartheid during the 1960s may well indicate a liberal concern in India's foreign policy, but this was a low-cost posture in comparison to crises in its own regional neighborhood where security stakes and strategic objectives are paramount. Crises in neighboring countries therefore offer the best context to examine whether decision-makers recognize regime type as a salient factor in their assessments, affecting Indian security and interests (e.g. differences between a liberal and decentralized democracy, versus a centralized, ethno-majoritarian military autocracy). This possible link between regime type and Indian security interests is examined in detail in Part II of the dissertation.

While the pursuit of strategic objectives may be both a sufficient and necessary condition to explain India's posture, this does not necessarily mean that liberal concerns are altogether absent from Indian strategic thought and practice: a) liberal concerns may be present even if overridden by superior objectives/exigencies; b) liberal concerns may become salient when compatible with strategic objectives; and at the highest level c) liberal concerns may shape India's action and mode of intervention.

The hypothesis explored in this dissertation suggests that the *direction* of involvement may be influenced by the following strategic assessments:

a) *Moral recognition:* at the basic level, do Indian decision-makers recognize the balance of power between liberal and illiberal forces? Do they identify, in principle, with any conflicting party based on liberal solidarity and familiarity? This concern may often not be expressed publically, nor influence India's final posture, but illuminates India's subjective assessment and self-identification. This would reflect a liberal bond between liberal and democratic forces across South Asia.

b) *Causal calculus:* at the intermediary level, do Indian decision-makers identify a causal link between liberal democracy (including free multiparty elections, political pluralism and decentralization or minority rights) and political stability or economic growth? Do they evaluate the long-term costs and benefits of supporting either liberal or illiberal forces? This is the main hypothesis of Part II, analyzed in this dissertation's Chapter 6.

c) *Operational execution:* at the highest level, when they become salient (in coexistence with strategic objectives), how do liberal concerns influence India's actions? These operational modes must be located on a spectrum of interventionism that ranges from quiet diplomacy, to public statements, mediation, sanctions, and full military intervention. This

16

dissertation does not analyze this dimension separately, but the analysis of Indian posture in the case studies will help understanding how India also promoted democratization and liberalization abroad since 1947.

Sources

Beyond secondary sources, which include several studies on India's bilateral relations with the three countries examined and on its neighborhood policy (reviewed in Chapter 1), this dissertation makes use of a variety of primary sources.

1. Archival sources: Most importantly, for the case studies in the 1950s-60s, I consulted newly declassified files from the Ministry of External Affairs at the National Archives of India, in New Delhi. These confidential or secret materials monthly and annual political reports from diplomatic missions in Kathmandu, Colombo and Rangoon, as well as correspondence between PM J. Nehru, and various other officials in the Indian government. The files also include some reports by military and other Indian attaches posted at the regional missions in Nepal, Ceylon and Burma, as well as triangular correspondence with other ministries and agencies, including the Armed Forces and the Intelligence Bureau. This allowed me to develop insights into the minds of Indian decision-makers at the time, to trace the policy process, and to understand assessments from the vantage point of New Delhi and the neighboring countries.

2. Other primary sources: The selection of papers of PM J. Nehru, published in a series of volumes up to 1959, proved very useful to get a broad understanding of the bilateral dynamics, domestic constraints, and the international context to each crisis. I have also

made use of the collection of the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) and of Wikileaks cables for insights on Indian thinking from an American perspective, with the latter proving very useful for the 2000s. The case studies of the 1950s-60 and 1980s make detailed used of a superb ten-volume compilation of official documents on India's relations with Nepal and Sri Lanka edited by Avtar S. Bhasin, a former director of the Ministry of External Affairs' historical division.

Other primary sources include annual reports, foreign affairs records, and other annual compilations of selected documents published by the Ministry of External Affairs. The monumental collection of the Library of Congress allowed me to access a myriad of useful memoirs by retired Indian and other South Asian diplomats, political leaders and government officials, which are either out of print or condemned to oblivion in dusty libraries across the subcontinent. Through *ProQuest* I consulted the coverage of main international, Indian and South Asian newspapers of the crises in the 1980s.

3. Interviews: In the absence of declassified materials, research for the more recent case studies in the 1980s and 2000s, relies mostly on inferential sources (including public statements and parliamentary debates), a variety of secondary sources and, most importantly, targeted and semi-structured interviews with Indian decision-makers, which were posted either in New Delhi, mostly at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of External Affairs, or at the respective missions abroad, in Kathmandu, Colombo and Yangon. For four months, I travelled across India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar to track down and interview almost one hundred officials *directly* involved in, or had privileged information about the nine cases under examination. This also included political leaders, and members of India's intelligence and military organizations. The

interviews with officials and political leaders in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar were particularly helpful to crosscheck Indian accounts.

3. Relevance to the practice and study of Indian foreign policy

The scholarly literature and public debate about Indian foreign and security policies is deeply affected by the idea that the country suffers from an extraordinary deficiency to think and act strategically. As Chapter 1 goes on to show in detail, the myth of India's strategic incapacity has several causes, among which the poverty of historical research has had the most pernicious effect. Coupled with the persistent post-colonial *rhetoric* about India's alleged exceptionalism, the poverty of historiographical and empirical studies on strategic *practice* has created conditions for the proliferation of myths about Indian foreign policy, especially that decision-makers are driven by "idealism," or constrained by principles such as "non-interference".

Such divergence between rhetoric and practice has had a devastating impact on scholarship and the strategic debate in India, and also constrains decision-makers, who are often unable to articulate their more coercive policies in public. In a negative feedback loop, trained with ossified slogans and myths, whether it is the principle of "non-alignment," the idea that India "does not promote democracy," or that India adheres religiously to "non-interference" to engage any system of government in its neighborhood, there are indications that Indian officials may also be constrained in practice by the poverty of their country's strategic vocabulary.

This was reflected most recently, in late 2015, as the Indian government imposed an unofficial trade blockade on landlocked Nepal to coerce Kathmandu to adopt constitutional changes to satisfy demands from its *Madhesi* minority in the Terai borderlands. For several weeks thereafter, PM N. Modi and his officials thus took on the brunt of domestic and international public opinion for "bullying" a small neighbor. After a belated effort of public diplomacy and outreach, the government was finally able to articulate its decision to interfere in Nepal as being driven both by Indian security concerns *and* an interests in a more liberal and inclusive democracy in Nepal, and that, in the long-term, it saw these concerns as interdependent.[2]

This dissertation seeks to contribute to reducing this widening gap between India's regional strategic practice and the public perception and debate about it. By emphasizing the strategic nature and extraordinary continuities of India's neighborhood policy since the 1950s, and indeed since the foundation of the modern Indian state as the colonial Raj in the 19th century, it further seeks to contribute to the thriving historiographical turn in research about the country's foreign and security policies.

Former diplomat K. S. Bajpai cautioned that, as India develops greater capabilities, it must adapt and "develop both the concepts and the mechanics for using state power for state purposes," and explore the wide "range of instruments available in statecraft," even

---

[2] For an early interpretation: "Understanding Nepal's Constitutional Crisis: a Conversation with Prashant Jha," *The Diplomat*, Sept. 9, 2015: http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/understanding-nepals-constitutional-crisis-a-conversation-with-prashant-jha/. For a critical view: Harish Khare, "How Modi won praise for himself but lost Nepal for India," *The Wire*, Oct. 9, 2015: http://thewire.in/12765/how-modi-won-praise-for-himself-but-lost-nepal-for-india/.

if this "goes against the whole grain of our national upbringing and hopes of a better world."[3] This dissertation seeks to contribute to this task.

Present and future policy relevance

Against the current policy debate about India's neighborhood policy, this dissertation's relevance is anchored in three changing contexts.

First, after reforming its economy in the 1990s, India's security umbrella expanded with exponential internationalization of its trade, investments, and energy requirements.[4] India today imports more than 70% of its total energy requirements, and 90% of its oil through sea lanes. The size of the Indian diaspora doubled in less than two decades, with over ten millions of its citizens living abroad, most of which in the Gulf countries. Incoming remittances increased from US$2 to 70 billion since 1990. Net foreign direct investment rose by US$40 billion in the last 25 years alone.[5]

On the subcontinent, the advent of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) after the 1980s marked an unprecedented shift towards regional integration. For the first time in more than half a century, New Delhi started to look at India's border as connectors, not dividers, which beyond just benefits also increased the risk of further exposure to instability and conflict in its periphery. Such new strategic

---

[3] K. Shankar Bajpai, "Engaging the World," in *Indian foreign policy: challanges and opportunities*, ed. Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007), 85.

[4] A study on Indian strategy and economics by the former director of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) thus emphasizes that "India should regard the region from Kabul to Yangon and Hormuz to Malacca as its strategic economic space," Rajiv Kumar and Santosh Kumar, In the national interest: a strategic foreign policy for India (New Delhi: BS Books, 2010), 21.

[5] "India, 25 years later," *Business Standard*, July 25, 2015: http://www.business-standard.com/article/specials/india-25-years-later-116072500029_1.html.

horizons and rising interdependence require India to develop new instruments to defend its security in an "extended neighborhood," which has been variously defined by recent Prime Ministers as stretching "from Aden to Malacca," or "from the Suez to the South China Sea." [6] According to Jayant Prasad, a retired ambassador who served in Nepal and now directs the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses:

> *India's natural area of interest extends from Iran and Transoxiana in the West to China in the North, Myanmar in the East and the Indian Ocean region all around the subcontinent − from the Gulf of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca, or more broadly, from Suez to Singapore* [7]

Such a new definition of India's enlarged security environment has often been derided as reflecting India's delusional obsession to be recognized as a major power. This is based on the fallacious assumption that India can transcend security dilemmas and live in continued isolation and economic autarky. As India's diaspora, trade and foreign investments expand worldwide, so will the security horizons of its regional environment.

Second, beyond the changing domestic conditions and rising interdependence, India is also compelled to expand its security umbrella by the structural changes in the global distribution of power. The continued rise of China and decline of the United States are questioning the practicability of India's exceptionalist discourse, which posits that New Delhi can afford to look the other way, stay put in its subcontinental corner, and thus simply ignore or magically transcend the logic of balancing and power politics. India will

---

[6] C. Raja Mohan, "India's new role in the Indian Ocean," *Seminar* 617, no. Sept. (2011). See also David Scott, "India's "Extended Neighborhood" Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power," *India Review* 8, no. 2 (2009). Most recently, India's Defence Minister M. Parrikar emphasizes that "located as we are at the centre of the Asian landmass astride the Indian Ocean, any reference to Asia implies its fullest geography ranging from the Suez to the shores of the Pacific, " June 4, 2016, at the Shangri-La Dialogue, in Singapore: http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145975.

[7] Jayant Prasad, "India's neighbours," *Seminar* 668, no. April (2015).

have to, and in fact has always been, playing that geopolitical game. As American strategic analyst Ashley Tellis points out:

> *…the notion that Indian exceptionalism can survive by sheer force of example in a world of beasts could turn out to be excessively optimistic if not simply naive. After all, India's capacity to lead by example will be, in the final analysis, largely a function of its material success, and this accomplishment will not come to pass without strong economic, political, and military ties with key friendly powers, especially the United States.[8]*

This does not mean that India must necessarily tilt towards becoming a subservient "junior ally" of the United States to contain China, nor does it mean that it must necessarily cozy up to China and curtail its regional interests to assuage Beijing. Instead, it will have to continue to play a dual game, continuing its sophisticated external balancing, variably defined as "omni-alignment" (Kanti Bajpai) or "strategic diversification" (Tanvi Madan), even while also concentrating on internal balancing to expand its domestic capabilities.[9]

Writing in 1981 about American accusations that India was obsessively focused on its regional security, strategic analyst K. Subrahmanyam cautioned his fellow Indian citizens to "be prepared to wait patiently for a very long period when objective facts would establish the untenability of western projections about Indian hegemony and expansionism." [10] It would not take that long. Just seven years later, in 1988, Subrahmanyam's American nemesis, Henry Kissinger, presciently noted in an open

---

[8] Ashley J. Tellis, *Nonalignment redux: the perils of old wine in new skins* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 55.

[9] Kanti Bajpai, "Strategic Culture," in *South Asia in 2020: Future strategic balances and alliances*, ed. Michael R Chambers (Carlisle: US Army War College, 2002); Tanvi Madan, "With an Eye to the East: The China Factor and the U.S.-India Relationship, 1949-1979" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2012).

[10] K. Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," *Strategic Analysis* 5, no. 5-6 (1981): 252.

memo to the next U.S. President that New Delhi was bound to take on a more important

role across Asia, in partnership with Washington:

> *[India's] goals are analogous to those of Britain east of Suez in the 19th century – a policy essentially shaped by the Viceroy's office in New Delhi. It will seek to be the strongest country in the subcontinent, and will attempt to prevent the emergence of a major power in the Indian Ocean or Southeast Asia. Whatever the day-to-day irritations between New Delhi and Washington, India's geopolitical interest will impel it over the next decade to assume some of the security functions now exercised by the United States.[11]*

As the United States' relative power will naturally decline over the next decades, India

will sooner or later be forced to develop its own capabilities to shape the regional

environment and, whenever necessary, also intervene in areas and issues beyond its

territorial borders.

The third context reflecting the policy relevance of this dissertation relates to the

extraordinary asymmetry between the colossal Indian research on global issues (nuclear

security, relations with other great powers) and the comparatively small insights on its

relations with its immediate neighbors across South Asia. Referring to this skewed focus,

PM M. Singh addressed India's diplomatic trainees in 2008:

> *…the most important aspect of our foreign policy is our management of our relations with our neighbours … we don't know adequately enough of what goes on in our neighbourhood. And many a times our own thinking about these countries is influenced excessively by Western perceptions of what is going on in these countries. I would like our diplomats to develop and Indian perspective on what is happening in our neighbourhood and use it as an important analytical tool for telling us what are the meaningful foreign policy and domestic policy options before us in dealing with the neighbouring countries.[12]*

Singh's reference to the excessive influence of "Western perceptions" reflects India's

growing interest in developing its own strategic concepts, which will require deeper

---

[11] Henry A. Kissinger, "A Memo to the Next President," *Newsweek*, September 19, 1988, 34.

[12] Address on June 11, in Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2008 (New Delhi: Geetika, 2009), 173.

historical understanding, in particular in terms of regional involvement. This task is now facilitated by a greater confidence to claim both "realism" and "liberalism" as part of India's strategic culture and establish a causal link between security and democracy beyond its borders.

As noted by his media advisor S. Baru, PM M. Singh was therefore "probably the first Indian prime minister to unabashedly hold up India's plural, secular, democratic credentials as worthy foreign policy principles".[13] Similarly, such rising self-confidence is facilitating the development of new strategic narratives, as testified by PM N. Modi's unprecedented emphasis on India's massive contribution to the two world wars "for the ideals of freedom and democracy."[14]

Strategic analyst C. R. Mohan, who served on India's National Security Advisory Board, has been one of the most ardent proponents of the study of India's past strategic practice to assist in the development of new instruments and concepts to address the country's future challenges, in the region and beyond. He thus notes that:

> *An India that stays true to the values of the Enlightenment, deepens its democracy, pursues economic modernization and remains open to the external world will inevitably become a power of great consequence in the coming decades. It will be a model for the political transformation of the volatile Indian Ocean region and a force for peace and progress in Asia and the world.[15]*

---

[13] Sanjaya Baru, The accidental prime minister: the making and unmaking of Manmohan Singh (Gurgaon: Penguin/Viking, 2014), 165-6.

[14] Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit a World War 1 memorial in France (2015) and to visit the Arlington National Cemetery in the United States. On June 6, 2016, in his speech to the U.S. House of Congress, he said he "honoured their courage and sacrifice for the ideals of freedom and democracy … [as] India knows what this means because our soldiers too have fallen in distant battlefields for the same ideals," http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=146076. For two recent accounts of Indian contribution to World War II, see Srinath Raghavan, *India's war: World War II and the making of modern South Asia* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Yasmin Khan, *India at war: the subcontinent and the Second World War* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[15] C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: the shaping of India's new foreign policy* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003), 272.

4. Disciplinary context and contribution to International Relations

Was Nehru's non-alignment a realist or idealist approach to world politics? Was India's 1971 military intervention in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) driven by geostrategic interests or by humanitarian values? Did India's intervention in Sri Lanka focus on pragmatic security or by benign altruism for the Tamil minority? Such questions reflect both the popularity, as well as the limitations of a binary approach to understand India's foreign and security policies.

This "tyranny of binaries" is not unique to India; it pervades the theoretical field of International Relations (IR). Many contemporary debates and university teaching on international politics are thus reduced to a tired dichotomy between "realists" and "idealists", or between "interests" and "values," as reflected in Table 3 below, which expands on a summary by American scholar A. M. Slaughter of U.S. President B. Obama's policy towards Libya, in 2011:

Table 3: Binaries in International Relations16

Realists	Idealists
Interests	Values
Conservatives	Liberals
Hawks	Doves
Competition	Cooperation
Strategic	Moral
Vital	Optional
Strategic	Moral
War	Peace
Pragmatic	Principled
Ends	Means
Hard Power	Soft Power

---

[16] See "Interests and Values in Obama's Libya Strategy," New York Review of Books, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2011/mar/30/interests-values-obamas-libya-strategy/?printpage=true.

Objective	Subjective
Rational	Emotional
Hegemon	Leader
Self-help	Interdependence
Sovereignty	Commons
Suspicion	Trust

Such elegant dichotomies are widely employed to debate and explain foreign policy decisions. However, while often useful to teach undergraduate neophytes or to debate with non-experts, such binaries can become rooted to an extent that they also hinder scholarly research. For example, when scholars debate whether India's nuclear program was driven by a quest for reputation or security, and focus on the 1998 tests, they often ignore the complex environment, the particularly history, and the myriad of contingent causes which lead to its gradual nuclearization, over a period of almost fifty years. Binaries thus pervade and constrain IR scholarship. As Francis Gavin and James Steinberg note:

> *…binary choices—'either-or choices,' which are the standard fare of academic hedgehogs— provide far less to policymakers than the ivory tower realizes. … Statesmen, unlike academics, do not have the luxury of 'betting' on one theory or the other … In their desire to achieve the rigor of their natural science counterparts, most social science academics have developed a profound aversion to the inherent uncertainty and contextual specificity that plagues strategic policy formulation and hew to the notion that the theories they work with cannot usefully make the transition from the "laboratory" to the real world.[17]*

Despite such limitation, scholars continue to perpetuate binaries, including in the history of their own discipline. For decades, students have thus been taught that realists are cynics and immoral warmongers, while liberals are idealists seeking greater cooperation

---

[17] Francis J. Gavin and James B. Steinberg, "Mind the Gap: Why Policymakers and scholars ignore each other, and what should be done about it," *Carnegie Reporter* 6, no. 4 (2012): 11.

and peace.[18] The tussle between idealism and realism is accordingly referred to as the modern discipline's alleged "first debate" in the first half of the 20th century.[19] As Michael C. Williams shows in his re-interpretation of the work of Hans Morgenthau, such approach has ignored the specific political and moral functions of "realism" against the background of inter- and post-War Europe and the United States.[20]

The binary approach is also reflected in the debate on what role "ideas" play in international politics.[21] In their most radical versions, this line of inquiry seeks to quantify ideas, values and principles in order to measure their influence on policymaking.[22] Systemic theories, in turn, completely dismiss the role of ideas in international politics and in foreign policy, which is reduced to a set of automatic reactions to structural demands. In this radical perspective, given the anarchical order of self-help, states are deterministically forced to follow security-maximizing principles and, as a consequence, diplomats are little more than robots reacting to exogenous inputs.[23] American structural IR theorists thus dedicated much effort during the Cold War debating if and how the

---

[18] See, for example, the following widely employed manual to teach introductory courses to International Relations at the undergraduate level: John Baylis and Steve Smith, *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[19] Lucian M. Ashworth, "Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations," *International Relations* 16, no. 1 (2002); Peter Wilson, "The myth of the 'First Great Debate'," *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 05 (1998).

[20] M.C. Williams, *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[21] For an overview, see Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Ideas and foreign policy: beliefs, institutions, and political change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[22] Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A tale of two cultures: Qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[23] Beginning with the structuralist, or neo-realist turn in the late 1970s: Kenneth Waltz, "Theory of international politics," (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979). He would subsequently clarify that "the behavior and practice of states and statesmen are omitted from international political theory not because of their unimportance but because [it] requires a distinct theory dealing with the politics and policies of states," quoted in Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and its critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 340.

United States and the Soviet Union were constrained by ideology, respectively by Liberalism and Communism.[24]

The constructivist critique of the 1990s has often responded by focusing on the variation in what is shared between states or other international actors: norms, constructed through an inter-subjective, social process marked by perpetually changing agent-structure dynamics.[25] But, even here, "good" and "bad" norms appear as a sanitized construct, divorced from ethical and moral concerns.[26] Of greater value has been the Constructivist research paradigm's contribution to understand how a particular state's or decision-making elite's "worldviews" come into being, change and are replaced over time according to both internal political dynamics and external shocks.[27] In radical contrast with the structuralist (neo-realist) school mentioned above, domestic approaches to foreign policy have thus made a comeback in recent years, often under the disciplinary tag of "foreign policy analysis," "neoclassical realism," "critical security studies," or "post-structuralism."[28]

---

[24] This is reflected in the scholarship on whether Soviet foreign policy was driven by ideological or power and security considerations. Cases of potential tension between Soviet values and interests, and the issue of interference, include the Hungary crisis in 1956, the decision to occupy Afghanistan in 1979, or the Poland *solidarnosk* movement in 1980. For a classic overview see the work by Adam Ulam "Soviet Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy," World Politics 11, no. 02 (1959): 152. For a more recent debate on the role of ideas and power in the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's collapse, see Robert English "Power, ideas, and new evidence on the Cold War's end: a reply to Brooks and Wohlforth," International Security 26, no. 4 (2002).

[25] Alexander E Wendt, "The agent-structure problem in international relations theory," *International organization* 41, no. 03 (1987); John G. Ruggie, "What makes the world hang together? Neo-utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge," *International organization* 52, no. 04 (1998).

[26] For a constructivist distinction of "good" and "bad norms": Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998).

[27] Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking the world: great power strategies and international order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[28] For foreign policy analysis: Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign policy analysis: classic and contemporary theory* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). For an early neo-classical realist approach: G. Rose, "Neoclassical realism and theories of foreign policy," *World politics* 51, no. 01 (1998). On the European turn towards critical security studies: Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *Critical security studies: concepts and cases*

Strategic culture

While rejecting both binaries and the theory-driven approach to IR, this dissertation adopts the framework of strategic culture for two reasons. The first reason is purely tactical and conceptual, in order to liberate the reader from the charged ideological and political debate about Indian foreign policy. Referring to a "strategic culture" thus allows me to transcend the toxic binary between idealism and realism. Rather than being forced to refer to Indian decisions in the various case studies as driven either by values (democracy) or interests (security), this allows me to explore nuance, a wider spectrum of strategic thinking, and the possibility of an *Indian* governmental *culture* of involvement.

The second reason is more substantive, and relates to the vast literature on the alleged lack of an Indian strategic culture. As detailed in Chapter 1, one of the widest consensuses in the IR literature and in the Indian public debate is that the country's leaders and decision-makers suffer from an exceptional inability to think and act strategically. This dissertation seeks to correct this perception and demonstrate that given significant challenges and despite various shortcomings, Indian foreign and security policies towards the neighborhood reflect surprising levels of strategic acumen and continuity.

The field of strategic culture has developed in tandem with the neoclassical and constructivist critiques of structural realism after the 1990s. A. I. Johnston has offered a cogent definition and framework for its study, most notably in his own work on the

---

(London: Routledge, 1997). On a post-structuralist variant: R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/outside: international relations as political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

historical roots of contemporary China's "cultural realism."[29] Against the background of new rising powers beyond the West, particularly in Asia, he therefore emphasizes that studies on strategic culture can "help policymakers establish more accurate and empathetic understandings of how different actors perceive the game being played, reducing uncertainty and other information problems in strategic choice."[30]

While adopting Johnston's conceptual approach, this dissertation, however, makes a few necessary adaptations to the five criteria he sets out for a more successful study of strategic culture. First, in terms of *object of study*, my dissertation's focus (regional involvement) is situated at a medium range, in-between the higher level of "grand strategy" and the lower level of "strategic studies" that focus strictly on military force.[31] The former generally studies the macro issues of India's strategic worldviews and balancing behavior, while the latter's emphasis is more reductionist, on its armed forces or nuclear capability. This study explores an intermediary range of strategic culture, examining India's regional posture of involvement and its various instruments, from coercion to cooperation, as the output of a wider decision-making environment that comprises political, diplomatic, military and intelligence inputs.

Second, in terms of the *nature of cultural constraints*, my dissertation focuses on the institutional dimension of India's political system. It seeks to understand to what extent liberal and democratic beliefs influence Indian strategic thought and practice in the

---

[29] Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural realism: Strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[30] Alastair I. Johnston, "Thinking about strategic culture," *International security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 64.

[31] For a seminal definition of grand strategy: "The crux of grand strategy lies therefore in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime and peacetime) best interests," Paul M. Kennedy, *Grand strategies in war and peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5. For a military-oriented approach to strategic culture, see Colin S Gray, "Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back," *Review of international studies* 25, no. 01 (1999).

region. As so often in the IR literature, even Johnston's model falls into the binary trap of distinguishing "soft idealpolitik" and "hard realpolitik," which implicitly assumes that beliefs, ideology, and morality will *inevitably* to clash with security interests. I seek to escape this rationalist fallacy, and focus instead on what J. Goldstein and R. Keohane called "causal beliefs," as opposed to "principled beliefs."[32] The former are based on the experience of practice (e.g. liberal democracy enhances long-term stability in diverse societies) while the latter are more frequently used in the binary literature of IR and in public rhetoric but rarely, if ever influential in practice (e.g. democracy promotion as a matter of principle).

Third, in terms of *method of inquiry and proof*, the influence of strategic culture is often inferred from discourse analysis (public speeches) or practice (behavior), but often neglects to connect both levels. In the case of India, this is further hindered by an extraordinary wide gap between its exceptionalist rhetoric (non-interference) and its under-studied practice (involvement), discussed in detail in Chapter 1. With resource to declassified documents and interviews, this dissertation seeks to bridge this gap, establishing a causal link between Indian strategic thought and practice in the neighborhood.

Fourth, in terms of *transmission*, the strategic culture literature focuses on a variety of channels, especially organizational training, education and doctrines in the military field. This dissertation does not offer evidence for such formal transmission, given the variety of organizations and decision-making apparatuses analyzed. Instead, it hopes to show that continuity in strategic thought and practice indicates an extraordinary influence of

---

[32] Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and foreign policy*.

informal transference of knowledge between subsequent generations of Indian officials, dating back to the colonial period under the *Raj*, as suggested in Chapter 1.

Fifth, in terms of *change and continuity* of strategic culture, the literature emphasizes the importance of resisting the extreme views of culture as either persistently rigid or constantly malleable. By tracing the practice of Indian neighborhood involvement across sixty years, from the 1950s to the 2000s, and analyzing its pre-1947 colonial roots under the *Raj*, the dissertation is attentive to both dynamics of change and continuity. Given the rich literature that portrays India's foreign policy as reactionary and fickle − being constantly revamped by ideology, leadership and other changing factors − the emphasis will, however, be on the lines of continuity.

Contribution to other IR theories and debates

While problem-driven, policy-oriented, and focused on a single case, this dissertation addresses issues and employs concepts that will be of interest to several IR research fields and other comparative cases. As Richard Rose notes, "a study of a single country becomes an extroverted case study if it employs concepts that make it possible to derive generalizations that can be tested elsewhere."[33]

First, with its focus on India, in particular, this study caters to the rising demand for scholars to develop non-Western IR theories, concepts and narratives.[34] While there has been significant work on Brazil, Southeast Asia, and China, comparatively little work has

---

[33] Richard Rose and William J M Mackenzie, "Comparing forms of comparative analysis," *Political Studies* 39, no. 3 (1991): xx.

[34] Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, "Why is there no non-Western international relations theory? An introduction," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007).

been done on the field of IR in India, and its intellectual history, concepts and traditions.[35] As Stanley Hoffman presciently observed, IR was born as a distinctively American discipline, with a rationalist and positivist bias distinguishing it from scholarly approaches in England and continental Europe.[36] As the field rapidly internationalized with the globalization and industrialization of higher education in recent decades, leading also to a proliferation of IR departments and research across India, this dissertation seeks to contribute to recent calls to develop an Indian school, approach or theory of International Relations."[37]

Second, the dissertation's focus on how democratic India addressed security challenges in the region contributes to the current revival of interest in the *normative* dimension of realism. By rejecting IR's disciplinary binary and its caricaturized portrayal of realism as an immoral, cynic and power-maximizing approach, these efforts have concentrated on recovering the specific historical and political context against which realists N. Machiavelli, H. Morgenthau, or K. Waltz developed their theses.[38] Such attempts have been particularly visible in the United States, where growing interest has been devoted to

[35] On China, see: "Yan Xuetong on Chinese Realism, the Tsinghua School of International Relations, and the Impossibility of Harmony," http://www.theory-talks.org/2012/11/theory-talk-51.html. On Southeast Asia, from a Constructivist perspective, see Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[36] On the discipline's "American intellectual hegemony" and its "propensity toward parochialism in international relations theory and, more particularly, the persistence of an assimilationst logic exemplified, and bound up with, a distinctly American conception of disciplinarily, science, and progress," see Robert M. A. Crawford and D. S. L. Jarvis, *International relations - still an American social science?* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 3. See also Stanley Hoffmann, "An American social science: international relations," *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977); Nicolas Guilhot, *The invention of international relations theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[37] Siddharth Mallavarapu, "Theorizing India's Foreign Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[38] See Williams, *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*; K. Booth, *Realism and world politics* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011). On the consequent rediscovery of the "English school" of Hedley Bull, Martin Wight and others, under the "critical security studies" label, see Shannon Brincat et al., eds., *Critical theory in international relations and security studies* (London: Routledge, 2011).

the work of R. Niebuhr, which President B. Obama described as one of his main influences.[39] Not much interpretative effort is required to recover this moral dimension in realist statecraft; a mere reading of the classics will do, as transpiring in the following passage of H. Morgenthau's seminal *Politics among Nations*:

> *Political realism does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible — between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place.[40]*

This revisionist project, which recovers and revalues the work of allegedly archetypical realists such as H. Morgenthau, is of great scholarly importance today because it recovers the ethical and ideological dimension of realism, and thus questions the tired binaries discussed in the introduction to this section.

In the case of India, as discussed above and in Chapter 1, this is even more urgent, given that the poverty of historiographical and empirical work on Nehru's foreign policy has often translated into a binary debate on his alleged "realist" or "idealist" inclinations. Instead, as Srinath Raghavan's work on the 1950s suggests, the Indian Prime Minister appears as a "liberal realist," and "far more adroit and pragmatic than the naïf and idealist of retrospective detraction, (…) at the juncture of liberal and realist traditions."[41] This suggests the possibility of a specific Indian realist school of strategic thought,

---

[39] On the "Niebuhrian" American tradition in foreign policy see Andrew Bacevich's introduction in R. Niebuhr, *The irony of American history*: University of Chicago Press, 2008 [1952]). See also William Inboden, "Diversity under Freedom: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Transatlantic Community," *Foreign Policy Paper Series*, The German Marshall Fund, Washington, July 2012.

[40] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 11. See also Kissinger rejecting his image as an *uber-realist*: "The distinction between idealism and realism rejects the experience of history. Idealists do not have a monopoly on moral values; realists must recognize that ideals are also part of reality. We will be less frequently disillusioned if we emphasize a foreign policy designed to accumulate nuance rather than triumph through apocalyptic showdowns," Henry A. Kissinger, "The limits of universalism," *New Criterion* 30, no. 10 (2012): 23.

[41] Srinath Raghavan, *War and peace in modern India* (New Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 14.

reflecting the country's historical trajectory, democratic identity, relative capability, and geographic location.[42]

Second, while seeking to facilitate a realist understanding of Indian foreign policy, this dissertation's focus on the country's democratic identity also contributes to a wider geographic understanding of liberal theories of IR, which have focused almost exclusively on Europe and other Western states.[43] As one of the few liberal democracies situated outside the political West, India represents an interesting outlier to improve our understanding on how regime type, institutions and values can affect foreign policy in other regions of the world. The fact that India has been almost exclusively surrounded by autocratic states in its neighborhood since 1947 poses a further interesting test to the salience of liberal principles in its foreign policy.

Third, the dissertation also contributes to the literature on Constructivism and its emphasis on how norms shape state behavior. On the one hand, it demonstrates how independent India adapted Western norms of non-interference and state sovereignty to the region, reflecting a process of localization that began under the colonial Raj.[44] As suggested in Chapter 1, post-colonial India's relations with its smaller neighbor states mirror the colonial norm of conditioning native states' sovereignty. On the other hand, constructivists will also be puzzled by the low levels of normative inter-subjectivity in the relations between India and its neighboring states, despite high levels of socio-cultural

---

[42] On the Nehruvian legacy as a line of continuity, and a "mindset" described as "cautious prudence," see Pratap B. Mehta, "Reluctant India," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (2011): 108.

[43] See, for example, Michael W Doyle, "Liberalism and world politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 04 (1986); G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal internationalism 3.0: America and the dilemmas of liberal world order," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009).

[44] On norm localization and adaptation to different regions, see Amitav Acharya, *Whose ideas matter? Agency and power in Asian regionalism* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2011).

links. Given such similarity and proximity, why do levels of regional inter-state cooperation remain so low, and distrust so high?

Fourth, in terms of mid-range theories, the dissertation contributes to the burgeoning literature on foreign policy analysis and its focus on decision-making processes, bureaucratic and organizational politics.[45] The case study method, with nine crises examined in detail, generates valuable insights into Indian foreign policy's the institutional and ideational environments. Beyond inferential discourse analysis, the archival and oral sources allow for a reconstruction of the decision-makers' assessments, thought and debates, and how these influenced cries postures.

Fifth, the dissertation contributes to the literature on regional powers, and on the puzzling variation in how they relate to their peripheral small states.[46] While much emphasis in the last three decades has been on studying regional cooperation and multilateralism, less attention has been devoted to understand the classic policies of hegemonic involvement and intervention. Given its abnormally low levels of institutional and economic integration, South Asia offers, in this context, a valuable "live laboratory" for scholars, as India's integrity and security continues to be dependent on stability in its periphery.

Finally, the dissertation contributes to the renewed debate on the merits and pitfalls of foreign and, in particular, liberal interventionism.[47] The literature has recently been

---

[45] For an overview, see Hudson, *Foreign policy analysis: classic and contemporary theory*.

[46] Daniel Flemes, ed. *Regional leadership in the global system: ideas, interests and strategies of regional powers* (London: Routledge, 2010); Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and powers: the structure of international security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Sandra Destradi, "Regional powers and their strategies: empire, hegemony, and leadership," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 04 (2010).

[47] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George W. Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," *International Organization* 60, no. 03 (2006); John M Owen, "The foreign imposition of domestic institutions," *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (2002). For a classical American debate, see Hans J. Morgenthau, "To intervene or not to intervene," *Foreign Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1967).

revived under the liberal and Western variant of "democracy promotion" or the multilateral principle of the "responsibility to protect" (R2P), driven by the neo-conservative or liberal internationalist impulses in American post-Cold War foreign policy.[48] While the liberal urge to promote democracy and human rights has always influenced U.S. foreign policy, it assumed a central role after the end of the Cold War.[49] In 1993, political scientist Larry Diamond thus emphasized that "a more democratic world would be a safer, saner, and more prosperous world for the United States."[50] Even at the libertarian Cato Institute, Joshua Muravchik's detailed study on "exporting democracy" concluded that "what is good for democracy is good for America [because] the more democratic the world becomes, the more likely it is to be both peaceful and friendly to America."[51] Reflecting the Democratic Party's Wilsonian tradition, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott emphasized in the 1990s that "only in an increasingly democratic world will the American people feel themselves truly secure."[52] During the 2000s, the neo-conservative wing in the Republican Party, under George W. Bush, would further embrace the idea that the United States' national security interests depended on its capacity to promote and enforce democratic regime changes abroad.

---

[48] M. Cox et al., eds., *American democracy promotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); G. John Ikenberry, "Why Export Democracy?," *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-)* 23, no. 2 (1999); T. Carothers, "The continuing backlash against democracy promotion," *New Challenges to Democratization* (2010).

[49] Nicolas Guilhot, *The democracy makers: human rights and international order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). On the 1980s, in particular, see also Robert Pee, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy Under the Reagan Administration* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[50] Larry Diamond, "Promoting democracy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 87 (1992): 30. See also Sean M Lynn-Jones, *Why the United States should spread democracy* (Boston: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 1998).

[51] Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1992), 222.

[52] Strobe Talbott, "Democracy and the national interest," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 6 (1996): 63.

When referring to India, however, American policymakers and analysts often derided India's reluctance to pursue a more liberal foreign policy, and scholars swiftly concluded that neophyte India had no experience in promoting democracy, human rights or any other "values" abroad.[53] As this dissertation seeks to demonstrate, especially in its second part, India's long and experienced tradition of regional involvement and intervention includes a variety of instruments to promote regime democratization and liberalization and to protect humanitarian and minority rights. Too often, however, this rich liberal strand in India's neighborhood policy has been simply forgotten or rejected for not conforming to Western benchmarks of "democracy promotion" or "liberal interventionism."

5. Dissertation structure

Chapter 1 offers a broad overview of the historical foundations and development of India's regional strategy, and reviews the literature and debates on the country's strategic culture.

Part I of the dissertation provides case study-oriented insights into the decision-making processes that drove Indian responses to the nine crises in the three neighboring states of Nepal, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Myanmar (Burma), across three periods. What specific factors and cost-benefit analyses determined India's response, and its degree and direction of involvement? By reconstructing policy debates, the case studies in **Chapters 2, 3,**

---

[53] See, for example, Daniel Twining and Richard Fontaine, "The Ties that Bind? U.S.–Indian Values-based Cooperation," *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2011). For a recent attempt to correct such bias, see Richard Youngs, *The puzzle of non-western democracy* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015); Ted Piccone, *Five Rising Democracies: And the Fate of the International Liberal Order* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016).

and 4 suggest that India's posture, degree and direction of involvement in each regional crisis are determined by a combination of three strategic assessments: dispensation, order and geopolitics.

Part II of the dissertation proceeds to assess to what extent India's strategic culture of crisis response and involvement in the region is also shaped by its liberal democratic identity. Do decision-makers recognize that different regime types (democratic, autocratic, and more or less liberal) bring specific dividends and disadvantages, and if so, how does that shape Indian degree and direction of involvement in the neighborhood? **Chapter 5** offers an introductory overview to the liberal dimension in Indian foreign policy and then proceeds to show how India's open society and democratic institutions exert an *indirect* liberal influence on the government's policies towards neighboring states. **Chapter 6** explores the main argument of the dissertation, namely that India's strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement is *directly* influenced by its liberal democratic identity. By linking India's three strategic assessments (dispensation, order and geopolitics) to different regime types – democratic, authoritarian, and more or less liberal – the chapters re-examine the nine case studies to evaluate how India's posture is driven by a short/long-term and cost-benefit analysis.

The **Conclusion** reviews the dissertation's main findings, discusses the contribution to the study of Indian foreign policy in the neighborhood, and forward specific challenges to the future practice of India's regional strategy in and beyond South Asia.

CHAPTER 1 − FROM THE RAJ TO THE REPUBLIC: REVALUING INDIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

This chapter offers anoverview of the foundations and development of India's regional strategy. The first section moderates the great expectations about "rising power" India's capacity to contribute to a variety of liberal internationalist causes, especially that of promoting democracy abroad. By putting the country in comparative context with its democratic peers, it highlights India's extraordinary success given limited state capabilities and an insecure and illiberal regional environment. While proud of its exceptional political system in the non-Western world, India is also a weak and isolated democracy.

The second section proceeds to examine the causes behind the vast literature about the alleged absence of an Indian strategic culture, based on the mythology that its post-colonial elites' naïve idealism has crippled the country's ability to pursue its "interests" as a "normal power." Driven by rationalist fallacies, by an excessive focus on rhetoric, and by the poverty of historical and empirical sources that examine strategic *practice*, such allegations have hindered a realist understanding of Indian strategic culture.

The third section then focuses on the foundations of India's regional strategy. It argues that that these are rooted in the colonial period, under the British *Raj*, and that despite its continuity in practice after 1947, independent India's political leaders developed a revisionist foreign policy discourse that portrayed their country as an exceptionally benign power in the neighborhood. The consequent gap between India's regional strategic

practice and *discourse* resulted in a trapping effect on scholarship and also on Indian officials' ability to publically articulate their policies of regional involvement.

1. Proud, weak and isolated: India and its democratic peers

Just a few decades ago, many Westerners dismissed India as another failed state or questioned the sustainability of its future existence.[54] Scholarly debates then centered not on how or why, but whether India would be able to succeed at all: Would its democratic system succumb to authoritarianism or military rule? would it be able to sustain its moderate "Hindu rate of growth," wavering around 3%, despite its economic isolationism and autarky, and still avoid mass famines? Would it be able to secure and defend itself externally against Pakistan and China, and internally against ethno-national secessionism or Communism? Would its political reforms, driven by revolutionary affirmative action programs, lead to fragmentation and political chaos?

After the 1990s, as India embraced economic reforms, such gloom quickly morphed into the opposite extreme of glorification: India was suddenly surging as a "superpower," seemingly ready to take on the world, and thus drawing new interest from Western scholars, strategists, and business entrepreneurs. An extraordinary amount of hopes and demands have, since then, been deposited on India.[55] As a "rising power," it is constantly beckoned and expected to play the role of a more "responsible stakeholder" in the liberal

---

[54] For example, on India as a "soft state," bound to fail in economic governance, see Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian drama: an inquiry into the poverty of nations* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1968). On the roots of American negative views of India, see Harold Robert Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds: American views of China and India* (New York: J. Day, 1958). Fro a sceptical view, see also Selig S. Harrison, *India: the most dangerous decades* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

[55] See, for example, Philip Stephens, "India faces a choice: is it a big power or great power?" *Financial Times*, May 19, 2009: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/92dbb440-14bc-11de-8cd1-0000779fd2ac.html.

order.[56] India is now asked to build and protect "public goods," whether by stabilizing Afghanistan, combating climate change, negotiating multilateral frameworks, or protecting freedom of navigation and other "global commons."[57]

Between the lines of such expectations reigns the suggestion that India has been freeriding on this open system for over half a century, and that it must therefore start investing to earn its returns.[58] India "can", "must", and "should:" this is how many policy briefs begin, generally setting out a demanding list of tasks for the country's foreign policy to embrace its "global responsibility."

Such great expectations about India are particularly prevalent in the liberal internationalist agenda, whether on promoting democracy, applying sanctions on authoritarian regimes, the humanitarian principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), or ambitious state- and nation-building projects.[59] These expectations have been

---

[56] The phrase was first used by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, R. Zoellick, in 2005, referring to China. For an overview, see Xenia Dormandy, "Is India, or will it be, a responsible international stakeholder?," *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2007). For an Indian view, see C. Raja Mohan, "Rising India: partner in shaping the global commons?," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2010).

[57] For example: on India filling a "vacuum" left by the United States in Afghanistan, see Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan* (Washington DC: RAND, 2012). On multilateral negotiation strategies, see Amrita Narlikar, "India rising: responsible to whom?," *International Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2013). On climate change, see Stewart Patrick, "Irresponsible Stakeholders? The Difficulty of Integrating Rising Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010). On supporting the United States' rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific, and the role of Southeast Asia, in particular, see Jonah Blank et al., *Look East, Cross Black Waters: India's Interest in Southeast Asia* (Washington DC: Rand Corporation, 2015). For an Australian view on India's new leadership responsibilities in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific, see David Brewster, *India's ocean: the story of India's bid for regional leadership*: Routledge, 2014). On expectations about India becoming a "responsible nuclear power" after the bilateral deal with the United States in 2005, see the testimony of Ashton B. Carter before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, on Apr. 26, 2006: http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/publication/3992/assessing_the_india_deal.html.

[58] See e.g. the summary of the workshop on "Rising India: Implications for World Order and International Institutions," organized by the Council on Foreign Relations, in New Delhi, on Oct. 20-21, 2010: http://www.cfr.org/content/thinktank/IIGG_DelhiMeetingNote_2010_11_01.pdf.

[59] See Daniel Twining, "India's Relations with Iran and Myanmar: "Rogue State" or Responsible Democratic Stakeholder?," *India Review* 7, no. 1 (2008); Alan Bloomfield, *India and the Responsibility to Protect*: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2016).

increasingly placed on India in equal measure by the two wings of the American foreign policy establishment since the end of the Cold War.

Under President Bill Clinton, in the 1990s, and to some extent also under President B. Obama, since 2009, the Democratic Party has pursued a post-Cold War policy of liberal internationalism leading to a variety of policies to promote human rights and democratic governance worldwide, whether through direct interventionism (principally in the 1990s) or offshore coercive policies such as sanctions (particularly since 2009). Similarly, under the neo-conservative tilt of President George W. Bush, in the 2000s, the United States adopted an aggressive policy of "democracy promotion," including through coercive intervention and regime change, from Afghanistan to Iraq. This liberal impulse in U.S. foreign policy has deeper roots, reaching back to the 19th century, but has taken a more salient influence as the country embraced its unipolar, or hegemonic, identity after the end of the Soviet Union.[60]

After the 1990s, as they suddenly discovered India as a liberal democracy and "natural ally" in Asia, Americans as well as Europeans thus often expected India to automatically jump on the moral bandwagon of human rights and democracy promotion worldwide.[61] Naturally, when New Delhi either repeatedly excused itself from joining, or in some cases also actively opposed such initiatives – whether on Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Burma, Libya or Syria – Washington was often left either puzzled or fuming: how could a liberal democracy refuse to join such benign initiatives? What was "wrong" with India?

---

[60] For an overview on the post-Cold War era from a liberal perspective, see G. John Ikenberry, ed. *The crisis of American foreign policy: Wilsonianism in the twenty-first century* (Princeton University Press, 2009). For a summary of the neo-conservative view, see Ivo H Daalder and James M Lindsay, "America unbound: the Bush revolution in foreign policy," (2005).

[61] For an early definition of India as a "natural ally" of the United States, see Robert Blackwill, "Why is India America's Natural Ally?," *The National Interest* (2005).

Paradoxically, by defrauding such great expectations, India has often come under greater pressure than China, leading analysts to blur the differences between both states.[62]

Whether driven by geopolitical interests or by genuine liberal sentiments, such great hopes, expectations and demands deposited on India will continue to face disappointment until they recognize the country's particular history, capacity and location. These three conditions make India exceptional among its democratic peers worldwide. First, at the ideational level, this requires an understanding of India's domestic politics, and its identity as a liberal and democratic, but also as a post-colonial and non-Western state. Second, at the material level, this requires an understanding of its limited state capacity, based on a developing economy that still faces severe extractive challenges. Third, at the geographic level, this also requires an understanding of India's profoundly illiberal regional environment and the security threats that permeate its neighborhood.

By taking these three dimensions into account, and comparing India's strategic context to that of other democratic powers, a more realistic picture emerges on what India can and may also be willing to contribute to strengthen the liberal order.

a) Identity: Liberal democratic, non-Western, and post-colonial

The liberal and democratic credentials of India's political system reflect its identity as a post-colonial, non-Western, and diverse society. India is at least as democratic as its Western peers, but its democracy is *Indian;* an aspect that is often overlooked.

---

[62] Eric Heginbotham and George Gilboy, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

India has been a continuously functioning democracy of universal franchise since the country adopted its first independent constitution, in 1949. Its representative and liberal institutions and traditions are even older, developing under British rule from the late 19th century onwards.[63] This democratic experience has survived a variety of challenges, including Indira Gandhi's emergency rule in the 1970s, chronic under-development, complex coalition politics, massive political mobilization of the lower castes, cyclical episodes of communal violence, and a myriad of separatist and other insurgencies. Despite such threats and trials, democracy has thrived in India.[64] It is now the world's largest democracy: 814 million voters enrolled during its last general election, in 2014.

Table 4 compares India to twelve other democratic great powers. In terms of longevity of its regime, only the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and France are ahead of India – the second post-colonial state is Nigeria, with half the longevity (28 years). India is also formally the largest democracy in the world, with almost as many registered votes as those in all of its peers taken together. While average voter turnout in India is moderate (62%), it has been consistently rising, in contrast with declining participation in most Western and developed democracies.

Not surprisingly, India's state identity is therefore also profoundly exceptionalist, based on the perception that it offers a democratic model for other post-colonial, non-Western, and developing countries. This exemplary identity of the Indian state goes back to the anti-

---

[63] On these colonial roots, see Bayly, C. A. Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought In the Age of Liberalism and Empire, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[64] For a good overview, see Atul Kohli, ed. *The success of India's democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

colonial struggle, which its leaders often define as having laid the ground for a universal

movement towards political liberation from imperialism.[65]

Table 4: India and its democratic peers.

	Age of current democratic regime (in years)[66]	Registered voters (in millions, global rank)[67]	Average voting adult population (VAP) turnout[68]	VAP turnout change (in %: first - last election)[69]
United States	211	190 (2)	47%	-6
United Kingdom	126	46 (18)	71%	-10
Australia	110	15 (43)	84%	-13
France	65	43 (19)	64%	-28
India	61	834 (1)	62%	+11
Germany	61	61 (12)	78%	-10
Japan	59	101 (6)	68%	-13
Nigeria	28	67 (10)	42%	-11
Brazil	26	140 (4)	54%	+51
Turkey	28	56 (13)	76%	+6
South Africa	17	25 (31)	63%	-32
Indonesia	12	185 (3)	86%	-3
Mexico	9	83 (9)	49%	+27

---

[65] On the early exceptionalist and universal foundations and ambitions of Indian state identity, see M. Bhagavan, *The Peacemakers* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012). On exceptionalism during the colonial freedom struggle, in particular by R. Tagore, see Pankaj Mishra, *From the ruins of empire: The intellectuals who remade Asia* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2012).

[66] Based on a dichotomous coding of democracy (1800-2010): https://sites.google.com/site/mkmtwo/data.

[67] During the last parliamentary election, in millions, as of 2015, bases on IDEA's voter turnout database: http://www.idea.int/vt/field.cfm?field=78&region=-1.

[68] From 1945 until most recent elections, as of 2015, based on IDEA's voter turnout database: http://www.idea.int/vt/.

[69] As of 2016, based on IDEA's voter turnout database: http://www.idea.int/vt/.

In a recent overview, scholar Perry Andersen offered a summary of this exceptionalism: former PM M. Singh notes that India's struggle for independence has "no parallel in history," culminating in a constitution that is "the boldest statement ever of social democracy;" historian R. Guha observes that India anticipated "by some fifty years, the European attempt to create a multilingual, multireligious, multiethnic, political and economic community;" economist Amartya Sen calls India "especially fortunate" in its millennial traditions of "public arguments, with toleration of intellectual heterodoxy;" and scholar S. Khilnani notes that "independent India became the first country in the non-Western world to choose a resolutely democratic constitution," which represents "the third moment in the great democratic experiment launched at the end of the 18th century by the American and French Revolutions."[70]

Such exceptionalism has been gradually gaining ground with time, and a rising number of Indian now publically recognize the dividends of democratic rule, and refer to the democratic system as more than a mere accident of history or a matter of convenience. This rising sense of exceptionalism and confidence in the *Indian* democratic model is discussed, in detail, in Chapter 5.

b) Capacity: limited and developing

India's elephantine geographic and demographic size, its large economy, its nuclear-armed military, and other absolute indicators are often invoked as proof that India is a

---

[70] Quotes from P. Anderson, "Gandhi Centre Stage," *London Review of Books* 34, no. 13 (2012). For a comprehensive overview on the history of democratic India since 1947, Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The history of the world's largest democracy*: Pan Macmillan, 2011). For an exceptionalist definition of India, see Sunil Khilnani, *The idea of India*: Penguin Books India, 1999).

"great power" or possibly even an embryonic "superpower."[71] Despite rapid growth rates since 1991, however, this overlooks the Indian state's fragility to perform key functions.

India thus still lags far behind its peers in terms of extractive capabilities, for example to control its territory or to convert resources into wealth. In his research on the Indian state's capacity in a global context, political economist Milan Vaishnav showed how it has been consistently outperformed by most (sometimes even all) of its peers, both democratic and undemocratic, on indicators such as per capita public sector employment, total tax revenue as percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), judicial enforcement of contracts, per capita police officers, or healthcare worker density.[72]

Among more than one hundred low-income developing countries, India will rank comparatively well, even though just below the median. But rather than comparing it to the 15 worst countries in terms of state capability, including Myanmar and Afghanistan, India's limitations are only exposed when pitted against its geopolitical peers, especially other powers with regional or global ambitions. In this perspective, at the current pace, it would require India 63 and 116 years, respectively, to reach Singapore's present levels of government effectiveness and resource efficiency.[73] Chart 1 illustrates this discrepancy with reference to the *State Fragility Index* over the last twenty years: except for Nigeria, the

---

[71] On the potential and limits of this term as applied to India, see "India: The Next Superpower?" LSE Ideas Report, SR010, March 2012: http://www2.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/SR010.aspx.

[72] Milan Vaishnav, "Five Truths about India," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Nov. 2, 2012: http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2012/11/02/five-truths-about-india/.

[73] L. Pritchett et al., "Capability traps? The mechanisms of persistent implementation failure," *Center for Global Development Working Paper*, no. 234 (2010): 17.

Indian state's fragility is superior to all other eleven democratic states in our sample basket, including Indonesia and Mexico.[74]

Chart 1: State Fragility Index, India and Peers (1995-2015)
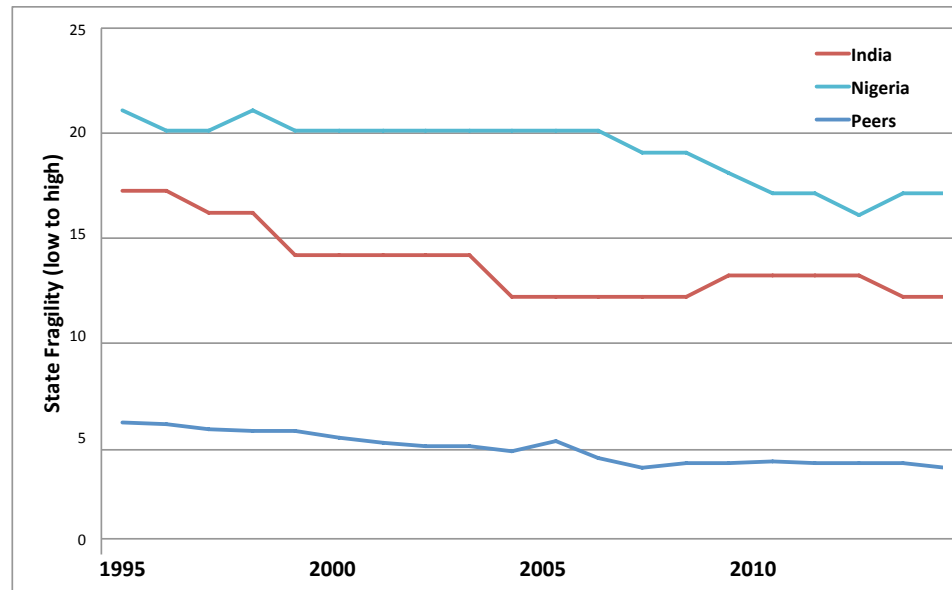
As reflected in these indexes, the Indian state is often the weakest in comparison to most other great powers, and often even the weakest among all other democratic powers. These basilar deficiencies are often overlooked when demands are placed on India to assume a more liberal interventionist profile in its region. While, in principle, the Indian government will often share the will to embrace such grand tasks, one cannot ignore that, in practice, it remains profoundly constrained in its capacity to pursue them.

---

[74] "State fragility" is defined as "closely associated with [its] state capacity to manage conflict; make and implement public policy; and deliver essential services and its systemic resilience in maintaining system coherence, cohesion, and quality of life; responding effectively to challenges and crises, and sustaining progressive development." *Center for Systemic Peace*: http://www.systemicpeace.org/SFImatrix2011c.pdf.

c) Environment: isolated and insecure

Finally, a third comparative dimension relates to India's geographic environment, which is marked by a high concentration of illiberal regimes and a formidable set of security challenges. India is an isolated democracy situated in a volatile context marked by high levels of internal and external conflict.[75]

In 2013, according to the *Freedom House Index*, India was the only "free" state in South Asia and exclusively surrounded by "partially free" or "unfree" states. New Delhi's geographically closest free capitals were distant Ulan Bator (Mongolia), Jakarta (Indonesia) and Telaviv (Israel). Besides India, in 2011, only four other such "free" states in the world faced a neighborhood exclusively composed of unfree or partially free states: Mongolia, Mali, Israel and Ghana.[76] Only in 2015, for the first time since its independence, could India afford the liberal luxury of facing democratically elected governments in all of its neighboring countries. Chart 2 illustrates India's democratic isolation in the region since the 1970s, based on the annual Freedom House Index. Besides isolation, democratic India is also located in one of the world's most unstable and insecure regions, with a variety of conflicts and inter-state conflicts.[77] According to the *Global Peace Index* for 2012, for example, Southern Asia was the world's third least peaceful

---

[75] On the causes of protracted insecurity in South Asia, see Thaza V. Paul, ed. *South Asia's weak states: understanding the regional insecurity predicament* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[76] See the full index for 2013 at http://www.freedomhouse.org/regions/asia-pacific.

[77] For an overview on ethnic conflict in South Asia and Indian exceptionalism in the region, see Deepa M. Ollapally, *The politics of extremism in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Maya Chadda, *Ethnicity, security, and separatism in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

among thirteen regions.[78] Compared to the location of its democratic peers in relatively more secure and stable regions, this places a further burden on the Indian state.

Chart 2: Freedom House Index, India and neighbors (1972-2016)

	AFGH.	BANGL.	BHUT.	MYAN.	CHINA	INDIA	MALD.	PAK.	SRI L.	NEPAL
1972	4.5	3	4	6	7	2.5	2.5	4	2.5	5.5
1973	6.5	4	4	6	7	2.5	2.5	4	2.5	5.5
1974	6.5	4	4	6	7	2.5	2.5	4	2.5	5.5
1975	6.5	6	4	6	7	3.5	4	5	3	5.5
1976	6.5	5.5	4	6	7	4	4	4.5	2.5	5.5
1977	6	5	4	6.5	6	2	4	5	2	5.5
1978	7	4	5	6.5	6	2	5	5.5	2.5	5.5
1979	7	3	5	6.5	6	2	5	5.5	2.5	4.5
1980	7	3.5	5	6.5	6	2.5	5	6	2.5	3.5
1981-82	7	5	5	6.5	6	2.5	5	6	2.5	3.5
1982-83	7	5.5	5	7	6	2.5	5	6	3.5	3.5
1983-84	7	5.5	5	7	6	2.5	5	6	3.5	3.5
1984-85	7	5	5	7	6	2.5	5	4.5	3.5	3.5
1985-86	7	4.5	5	7	6	2.5	5.5	4.5	3.5	3.5
1986-87	7	4.5	5	7	6	2.5	5.5	4.5	3.5	3.5
1987-88	6	4.5	5	6.5	6	2.5	5.5	3	3.5	3.5
1988-89	7	4	5.5	7	7	2.5	5.5	3	4.5	4.5
1990	7	5	5.5	7	7	2.5	5.5	4	4.5	4
1991	7	2.5	5.5	7	7	3.5	5.5	4.5	4.5	2.5
1992	6	2.5	6.5	7	7	3.5	5.5	4.5	4.5	2.5
1993	7	3	7	7	7	4	6	4	4.5	3.5
1994	7	3	7	7	7	4	6	4	4.5	3.5
1995	7	3.5	7	7	7	4	6	4	4.5	3.5
1996	7	3	7	7	7	3	6	4.5	4	3.5
1997	7	3	7	7	7	3	6	4.5	3.5	3.5
1998	7	3	6.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	4.5	3.5	3.5
1999	7	3.5	6.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	6	3.5	3.5
2000	7	3.5	6.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	3.5	3.5
2001	7	3.5	6.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	3.5	3.5
2002	6	4	5.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	3.5	4
2003	6	4	5.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	3	4.5
2004	5.5	4	5.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	3	5
2005	5	4	5.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	3	5.5
2006	5	4	5.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	4	4.5
2007	5	4.5	5.5	7	6.5	2.5	5.5	5.5	4	4.5
2008	5.5	4	4.5	7	6.5	2.5	4	4.5	4	4

[78] Data compiled from the Global Peace Index for South Asia as defined by the United Nations, which includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi-data/.

2009	6	3.5	4.5	7	6.5	2.5	3.5	4.5	4	4
2010	6	3.5	4.5	7	6.5	2.5	3.5	4.5	4.5	4
2011	6	3.5	4.5	6.5	6.5	2.5	3.5	4.5	4.5	4
2012										
2013										
2014										
2015										
2016										

In the 2011 *State Fragility Index*, for example, only three extremely or highly fragile states were located outside Africa and the Middle East (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar), all of which India's neighboring states. And except for China and Bhutan, who both score a 9 in the index (moderate fragility), all other neighboring states of India are seriously, highly or extremely fragile.[79] South Asia is also one of the world's most conflict-torn regions in terms of inter-state and intra-state (social) warfare: along with East Africa, it is the only among the project's ten "politically-relevant neighborhood contexts" that scores more than 20 annual warfare events since the end of the Cold War.[80]

No other democracy in the world faces such an illiberal and threatening regional security environment, which needs to be taken into account when demands are placed on India to "promote democracy" or enforce sanctions on authoritarian states. This geographic location fundamentally constrains India's capacity to pursue a liberal foreign policy.

*

Commenting on his country's exceptional democratic regime and the associated difficulties this poses, K. S. Bajpai, one of India's senior-most diplomats, observed:

> *We have more neighbours than all but a handful of countries – seven by land and three by sea (…) Jungles, mountains, deserts, oceans connect or separate them; Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism,*

---

[79] Ranging from Sri Lanka (13) to Myanmar (22) and Afghanistan (23): http://www.systemicpeace.org/SFImatrix2011c.pdf.

[80] See http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflict.htm#regcon.

The introductory and comparative analysis above highlighted the Indian state's democratic but non-Western identity, its chronic fragility and limited capabilities, and its isolated situation in an insecure regional context. Chart 3 illustrates India's exceptional condition in terms of state capacity and regional context with its peers, in terms of capacity (measured as the tax/GDP ration) and regional insecurity (measured as the respective Global Peace Index).

Chart 3: Exceptionally weak and insecure: India and its peers
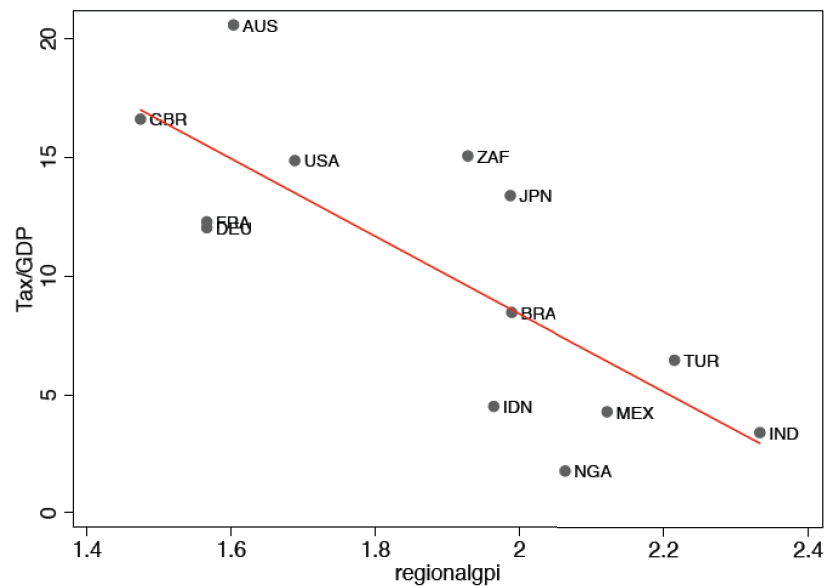
This exposes the limits of comparisons that pit India against other democratic states such as United States and European countries, but also to Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia or

---

[81] Bajpai, "Engaging," 81.

Japan. A more apt comparison, perhaps, would be between the India of Nehru, in the 1950s, and the United States of presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln. [82] While Indians generally welcome the liberal West's great expectations about their country, such hopes have to be tempered by the specific history and identity, limited material resources, and volatile geographic location of their state.

This dissertation is informed by this context, which is most apparent in India's relations with its neighboring states. For example, rather than interpreting India's refusal to support "liberal" interventions in Iraq, Libya or Syria as reflexive ideological hostility against the West, often described as an allegedly "non-aligned" position, emphasis will rather be placed on how India's own understanding of liberal democracy shapes its assessments, posture and involvement in neighboring states.

Referring to this centrality of India's regional context, in 1952, PM J. Nehru thus noted:

> *…our political outlook is governed more and more by geographical reality and does not depend so much on what Washington or London or some other distant centre might think. … from the point of view of India's interests, they [our immediate neighbors] are of primary importance in different ways and concern us more than many bigger and otherwise more important countries.[83]*

2. The myth of India's strategic incapacity: idealist and thoughtless

How well has independent India performed in terms of its foreign and security policies? Is it even possible to adopt an objective and comparative criterion of optimality? Given the context above, scholars disagree whether the glass is "half full or half empty," but they

---

[82] See J. Ann. Tickner, *Self-reliance versus power politics: the American and Indian experiences in building nation states* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

[83] In a letter to India's Chief-Ministers, Aug. 2, 1952: Avtar S. Bhasin, *Nepal-India, Nepal-China relations: documents, 1947-2005 v.1* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2005), 261.

tend to adopt a rather critical approach. The rich IR and strategic studies literature on India has focused on detailing a myriad of problems that debilitate the state's capacity to ensure the country's security, to counter external threats, or to pursue its policies abroad.

On the nuclear front, for example, India is thus seen to suffer from a "doctrinal lag," missing "significant institutional capacity and strategy to manage [its] nuclear hardware." [84] India's military modernization plans, including procurement policies, training and recruitment, resource allocation, and indigenization plans, have shown to be dangerously debilitated by dysfunctional civil-military relation.[85] Challenges to the Indian Armed Forces' operational preparedness, effectiveness and war-fighting qualities have been identified in detail, whether during the 1962 war with China or the peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka, in the 1980s.[86] On the domestic security front, scholars have thoroughly diagnosed the material, doctrinal, and operational shortcomings of India's counterinsurgency efforts.[87]

The literature also presents a litany of problems that afflict India's diplomatic apparatus, whether it is the alleged lack of strategic acumen, policy planning and implementation deficiencies, or the Ministry of External Affairs' chronic understaffing.[88] In his review of India's strategic thought, Rahul Sagar thus concludes that "the execution of India's

---

[84] Gaurav Kampani, "Institutional 'Software': The Hidden Dimension of Nuclear Instability in South Asia," *India in Transition*, Apr. 25, 2011: http://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/kampani. On India's nuclear program driven by the quest for "status" and "reputation," see George Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb " (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[85] For an overview, see Anit Mukherjee, "Facing Future Challenges," *The RUSI Journal* 156, no. 5 (2011).

[86] For example, on the China war, see John P Dalvi, *Himalayan blunder* (Bombay: Thacker & Co, 1969); Neville G. Maxwell, *India's China war* (Garden City: Anchor, 1972).

[87] Sumit Ganguly and David P. Fidler, eds., *India and counterinsurgency: lessons learned* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[88] For a historical perspective on the 1970s, see S. Tharoor, *Reasons of state: political development and India's foreign policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966-1977*: Vikas Publishing House, 1982). On recent material limitations, see D. Markey, "Developing India's Foreign Policy "Software"," *Asia Policy* 8, no. 1 (2009).

foreign policy is so haphazard and hesitant as to make it nearly impossible to attribute it to some clearly thought out ideological stance."[89]

Kanti Bajpai, at Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew School, reviews various schools of Indian strategic thought, but laments that while it has "a respectable record in promoting world order, over the past two decades India has been rather more reactive than creative."[90] Boston University's Manjari C. Miller, in turn, notes that India's "inability to develop top-down, long-term strategies means that it cannot systematically consider the implications of its growing power" and that, therefore, "New Delhi does very little collective thinking about its long-term foreign policy goals."[91]

Flaws in India's foreign and security policies have thus been described in minutiae, and there is little doubt that there are monumental shortcomings. However, while scholars have diagnosed and described deficiencies in great detail, they devote surprisingly scarce attention to explaining their *causes*. So even if one agrees with their negative assessments, the question remains as to what makes India such a basket case for policy failure. What factors induce this alleged "sub-optimal" policy-making? Why are India's civil-military relations dysfunctional? Why do Indian governments modernize their military without strategic foresight? What explains the institutional deficiencies of nuclear command and control structures? What causes Indian diplomats to underestimate external threats and fail to respond appropriately to secure their country?

---

[89] Rahul Sagar, "Grand Ideology, Bland Strategy," in *Grand strategy for India 2020 and beyond*, ed. V. Krishnappa and George Princy (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012), 71.

[90] Kanti Bajpai, "The Global Commons and India's National Security Strategy " in *Grand strategy for India 2020 and beyond*, ed. V. Krishnappa and George Princy (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012), 61.

[91] Manjari Chatterjee Miller, "India's Feeble Foreign Policy: A Would-Be Great Power Resists Its Own Rise," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2013).

Depending on their epistemological biases, theoretical background, geographic location, and level of methodological sophistication, scholars have suggested different explanations, but however shallow or deep, an extraordinarily large amount of them boil down to India's "idealism" and its officials' consequent incapacity to think and act "strategically."

a) The mythology of idealism and strategic incapacity

Common to most approaches is the assumption that India suffers from extraordinary limitations (or is reluctant) to pursue its security "interests." This rationalist view, deeply rooted in the American neo-realist and positivist philosophy of International Relations (IR), assumes that every state's capacity to respond to external threats and ensure its security depends on an optimal strategy to maximize power. From this perspective, India is presented as either incapable or even opposed to abiding by the rules of power politics. Idealistic, status-obsessed or naïve, its state is thus characterized as being unable to address external threats and challenges. This narrative is widely predominant and the literature reviewed for this dissertation produced a rich variety of terms to describe India and its foreign and security policies, a summary of which is listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Scholarly references to India and its foreign and security policies

Idealist	Non-strategic	Rhetorical
Ideological	Reactionary	Naïve
Utopian	Haphazard	Sophomoric
Irrational	Ad hoc	Drifting
Moralistic	Lackadaisical	Feeble
Liberal	Sub-optimal	Pious

Prickly	Inefficient	Insouciant
Platitudinous	Non-institutionalized	Non-aligned
Status-obsessed	Aimless	Third-Worldist

American analyst George Tanham has most famously developed this outlook with his thesis that India lacked a strategic culture. In a 1992 report commissioned by the U.S. governmental think tank RAND, he focused on a variety of historical, geographical and religious "determinants" to conclude that Indian strategic thinking is "inchoate and ad hoc (reactive) rather than precise and systematic."[92] A few years later, in a rejoinder article, he further asserted that "Indians continue to be relatively neglectful of security issues and to have no institutionalized method of appraising threats and fashioning strategic responses."[93] The extraordinary influence of his approach in India is reflected in the overall concurring responses it drew among Indian scholars at the time.[94]

While broadly quoted, Tanham's assertions in the 1990s were far from new, and mirrored the old Orientalist and British argument that Indians were not entitled to independence, because they allegedly lacked the necessary rational and strategic faculties for self-rule.[95] After independence, such views were reflected in more subtle derisions of

---

[92] George K. Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought* (Washington: RAND, 1992). See also George K. Tanham, "Indian Strategic Culture," *The Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1992).

[93] George K. Tanham et al., eds., *Securing India: strategic thought and practice* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 19.

[94] Varun Sahni thus agrees that India does not have a formal, institutionalized strategic culture, but argues that this is not uncommon among great powers. W. P. S. Sidhu also agrees, but argues that there is an important "invisible" and non-codified strategic culture. Mattoo agrees in terms of military strategy, but argues that India had a grand strategy under Nehru. Finally, Kanti Bajpai also generally agrees with Tanham, but argues that it will be only a matter of time until India develops its own strategic culture. Tanham et al., *Securing India: strategic thought and practice*.

[95] For an introduction on this Orientalist narrative, see Carol A Breckenridge and Peter Van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the postcolonial predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

India's new leadership, and of J. Nehru in particular, as being incapable of steering the country safely through international politics.

This view posited that India's new leadership, freshly emerged from of a non-violent freedom struggle, was not only unversed in the demanding tasks of diplomacy, but also naively predisposed to embrace idealist, pacifist and socialist policies. Writing in 1956, just after the Bandung conference and the rise of non-alignment, Oxford University historian G. F. Hudson thus saw India being driven by "callow nationalism:"

> *Suddenly confronted with the need to conduct a foreign policy in a world of extremely complex international relations, the Indian nationalist leaders looked around for information and advice, for a simple set of rules to enable them to interpret the bewildering phenomena of world affairs. (…) There is a disposition among Indians whose minds have been formed by the experience of the Gandhi era to overestimate the effectiveness of purely moral force in all human affairs and to underestimate the ruthlessness and aggressiveness of totalitarian Realpolitik as it operates in our time.[96]*

This was not a rare view, restricted to the distant comfort of St. Antony's College, but it permeated most Western interpretations of independent India's external conduct. Even a long-time India expert like the correspondent Taya Zinkin, for example, described Indian foreign policy as a reflection of "Nehru's moods," and a series of "reactions [which are] by definition the negation of policy, since it precludes the pursuit of a pattern, or even the calculation of India's interests."[97]

As illustrated in the following section, with reference to the principle of non-interference, Nehru's flourished speeches on developing a "third way" of non-alignment did not help to disprove these views, further creating the impression that Indian foreign policy was

---

[96] G. F. Hudson, "The Paradox of Jawaharlal Nehru: Democracy at Home, and Abroad?," *Commentary* 22, no. 6 (1956): 527.

[97] Taya Zinkin, "Indian Foreign Policy: An Interpretation of Attitudes," *World Politics* 7, no. 02 (1955): 179. On the anti-imperialist, pacifist, and socialist roots as the basis of Nehru's foreign policy, and his "mistrust of power," see also Bajpai, "Engaging," 78-80.

being driven by post-imperial, liberal and idealist principles. From here, in the 1950s, to the popular contemporary narratives about India being incapable to think and act strategically, it is but only a small step.

Whether because of "naïve Nehru," or the inordinate influence of Gandhian pacifism, Fabian socialism, British liberalism, the anti-imperial freedom struggle, or Third-Worldist non-alignment, Indian foreign and security policies have, according to this approach, repeatedly failed to pursue national interests and even endangered the state's survival.[98] Even avowedly neo-realist explanations will thus describe India's foreign policy as "driven by the desire to achieve major power status" and Nehru pursuing "a foreign policy that was beyond India's extant capabilities," because of the history of colonialism and Gandhi's "doctrine of non-violence and ethical practice."[99]

In terms of nuclear strategy, B. Karnad, for example, argues that India has tended to exercise self-restraint in fighting Pakistan and China due to "historical and cultural reasons", most notably Nehru's "moralistic" agenda.[100] Stephen Cohen and S. Dasgupta, in turn, note that India's doctrine of "strategic restraint" is driven by an ideological aversion to use the military as an instrument of state policy.[101] At London's King's College, Harsh V. Pant argues that Nehru transformed India into a "soft state," and is

---

[98] On Nehru's alleged "idealism," for example, see the introductory chapter in Harish Kapur, *India's foreign policy, 1947-1992: shadows and substance* (New Delhi: Sage, 1994).

[99] Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the world order: searching for major power status* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 251-9.

[100] Bharat Karnad, *India's nuclear policy* (Westport: Praeger, 2008).

[101] Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without aiming: India's military modernization* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012).

therefore still "in search of a foreign policy" because "India's ability to think strategically on issues of national security [is] at best questionable."[102]

S. Ganguly has developed the most elegant analysis of the allegedly pernicious influence of Nehruvian idealism and of other ideological proclivities by its post-colonial leadership and bureaucracy. In his view, India's foreign policy developed in three stages: a first period, up to the 1960s, driven by utopian objectives and causing the 1962 defeat against China; a second period, up to the 1980s, driven by PM Indira Gandhi's alignment with the Soviet Union, after 1971, and a continued embrace of socialism, non-alignment and other "moral" causes such as global disarmament; and the third and current "awakening" period, after the 1990s, marked by delayed realism and adjustment to American unipolarity. Ganguly and M. Pardesi thus conclude that "India's policymakers chose, quite deliberately, to ignore systemic constraints and decided to pursue an explicitly ideational foreign policy and with mostly disastrous consequences."[103]

This three-staged approach suggests a quasi-biological understanding of Indian foreign policy, which is described as infantile and naïve under Nehru, and then gradually evolving to shed its ideological compulsions and reach pragmatic maturity in the post-Cold War phase. Theoretically, it also suggests that an exceptionalist India, driven by morality, was progressively socialized into the crude anarchy of power politics by being punished, for example in the 1962 defeat against China. Thus commenting on Indian

---

[102] "Indian policymakers themselves are not clear as to what this status of great power entails. … India has little to offer except some platitudinous rhetoric" Harsh V. Pant, *The China syndrome: grappling with an uneasy relationship* (Noida: Harper Collins 2010), 122-3. See also Harsh V. Pant, "A Rising India's Search for a Foreign Policy," *Orbis* 53, no. 2 (2009).

[103] Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi, "Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy," *India Review* 8, no. 1 (2009): 5.

foreign policy's allegedly radical "reorientation" in the early 1990s, S. Ganguly observes that:

> *India's leaders have come to the harsh realization that force has continuing utility in international politics, that political rhetoric and posturing are no substitute for rapid economic growth, and that grand ideological coalitions ill-serve India's material interests. (…) Having shed most of its ideological burden, and adopted more pragmatic policies at home and abroad, India is in a position to move into the ranks of the major powers.[104]*

The critique of this alleged ideological baggage remains deeply entrenched and is widely prevalent in the literature on Indian foreign policy, both among foreign scholars and – perhaps more surprisingly – also in India itself. [105] Writing in 2003, C. Raja Mohan, for example, recognized that while Nehru had crafted a careful balance between idealism and realism, the 1990s saw the transformation of India from a "reactive power," which he metaphorically describes as a "vegetarian, slow-footed and prickly porcupine," into a "normal power," which he describes as a "tiger".[106] In the same line, former diplomat P. Menon describes Prime Minister N. Rao's government, in the early 1990s, as having been driven by "pragmatism", in contrast with "the two earlier phases … [which] depended more on intangibles like leadership charisma, India's unique post-colonial era prestige, and intellectual legerdemain, rather than on home-grown realities."[107]

It would be fallacious to argue that India's experience under colonialism did not have *any* influence on its strategic thought and practice after 1947.[108] However, there is little more

---

[104] S. Ganguly, "India's foreign policy grows up," *World Policy Journal* 20, no. 4 (2003): 47.

[105] For example, in David M. Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[106] The "centre of gravity of Indian foreign policy (…) shifted from idealism to realism in the 1990s," Mohan, *Rubicon*, 261, 66, 68.

[107] Prabhakar Menon, "The Quiet innovator: Foreign policy under P. V. Narasimha Rao," in *The Ambassadors' club: the Indian diplomat at large*, ed. Krishna V. Rajan (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012), 288.

[108] On the influences of post-imperial ideology on independent India's foreign policy, see Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Wronged by Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China* (Stanford:

than circumstantial evidence to sustain the bold claims and conjectures that Indian foreign policy has been *driven* or *determined* by the ideology of idealism, and that this caused the various strategic inefficiencies identified in the literature.

While Indian leaders and diplomats certainly share a particular worldview, by focusing on their public *speeches* instead of internal decision-making *processes* and *practice* as evidence, the field of Indian foreign policy studies ended up perpetuating, for many decades, the mythological mantra of idealism. In 1974, P. N. Haksar, one of PM Indira Gandhi's chief advisers, thus beckoned public intellectuals and scholars to distinguish India's strategic *rhetoric* and *practice*:

> *Every country seeks to cast its foreign policy in some ideological mould. One has, therefore, to be analytical and perceptive in distinguishing between the form and the substance, between outward appearance and inner reality. One has to distinguish between the slogans and the flags with which people march and the real factors motivating and shaping events.[109]*

Despite such warnings, the idealist narrative kept gaining ground in scholarship and in the public sphere, often fed unintentionally by Nehru's most ardent acolytes, who were bent on building a revisionist narrative of his foreign affairs as a heroic attempt to transform world politics and usher in an era of global peace.

The idea that India suffers from a "strategic deficit", both in thought and practice, is therefore deeply ingrained today and prevalent beyond just the corridors of universities.[110] Across society, Indians widely agree that their country lacks a strategic culture, and while the causes are passionately debated, they generally focus on the alleged

---

Stanford University Press, 2013); Priya Chacko, *Indian Foreign Policy: The politics of postcolonial identity from 1947 to 2004* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[109] Delivering the Sardar Patel Memorial Lecture, on Dec. 27 and 28: Parmeshwar N. Haksar, *Indias Foreign Policy and its Problems* (New Delhi: Patriot, 1989), 79-80.

[110] K. Subrahmanyam, *Shedding Shibboleths: India's Evolving Strategic Outlook* (New Delhi: Wordsmiths, 2005).

idealist legacy. Military officials have been particular prone to embrace this approach. Retired Indian Army Brig. Gurmeet Kanwal, for example, laments that India's "strategic culture has always been one of timidity, of helpless rage – that of behaving like a soft State that whines, but does not retaliate even in the face of the gravest provocation."[111] Not surprisingly, New Delhi's think thanks have thus recently begun pooling efforts to correct this alleged deficiency, for example by inventing a new "grand strategy."[112]

Eschewing the mantra "that India lacks a strategic culture", former National Security Advisor S. S. Menon thus lamented, in 2012, that "while one can understand foreigners spreading this idea, it is incomprehensible to me that some Indians should also believe this."[113] How did it come to this? What environment allowed and nurtured the proliferation of this idealist mythology, and the associated idea of an Indian strategic incapacity? Three main causes can be identified.

Democracy's strategic hysteria and angst

The first driver of this mythological narrative is related to the democratic nature of the Indian political system and its open society, which tends to underrate its own mechanisms of survival and defense and, instead, highlight its shortcomings and failures. As British scholar David Runciman has shown, the public spheres of liberal democracies have a

---

[111] "Why India suffers from the Panipat Syndrome," Feb. 12, 2016, *Rediff Online*: http://www.rediff.com/news/column/why-india-suffers-from-the-panipat-syndrome/20160212.htm.

[112] See, for example, S. Khilnani et al., eds., *Non-Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi Centre for Policy Research 2012); V. Krishnappa and Princy George, eds., *Grand strategy for India 2020 and beyond* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012); Kanti Bajpai et al., eds., *India's grand strategy: history, theory, cases* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014); Rajiv Sikri, *Challenge and strategy: rethinking India's foreign policy* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009). For a critical review of these and other attempts, see Teresita C. Schaffer, "New Delhi's New Outlook," *Survival* 52, no. 6 (2010).

[113] Shivshankar Menon, "K. Subrahmanyam and India's Strategic Culture," *Pragati*, no. 59 (2012): 22.

proclivity to engage in such bipolar oscillations, or "dual dangers," between tragic narratives about their impending doom in face of external adversities, on the one hand, and jubilant narratives about their exceptionalist triumph and missionary zeal to transform world politics: the "history of modern democracy is a tale of steady success accompanied by the constant drumbeat of anticipated failure."[114]

While this may be incomprehensible to Americans of today, cushioned by geography and hegemonic power, such angst deeply affected the United States' strategic debates in the past, whether in the late 19th century as it fought off the Spanish empire in Cuba, in the 1930s as it faced Nazi Germany submarines off its Eastern coast, or during the Cold War as rivalry with the Soviet Union drove another wave of "red scare."[115]

Similarly, in India, such strategic angst permeated the public debate in face of an adversarial Cold War context, and particularly in face of authoritarian Pakistan and Communist China. Speaking to an American audience in Washington DC, in 1981, J. Mehta, a former Foreign Secretary and adviser to Nehru, thus observed that while his country's "achievements have in many ways exceeded Indian or international expectations (…) India advertises, as only democracies do, its failures."[116] In the case of

---

[114] "Democracy's Dual Dangers," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nov. 18, 2013: http://chronicle.com/article/Democracys-Dual-Dangers/142971. See also David Runciman, *The confidence trap: a history of democracy in crisis from World War I to the present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[115] For the inter-War angst about democracy as a handicap, see Walter Lippmann, *Public opinion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922). On the American roots of the modern revival of realism, in particular its structural variant, see Michael C. Williams, *The realist tradition and the limits of international relations*: Cambridge University Press, 2005). On anxious U.S. Cold War attempts to moralize the use of military and nuclear force, see Bernard Brodie, *Morals and strategy* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1964). On interventionism: Stanley. Hoffmann, "Duties beyond borders: on the limits and possiblities of ethical international politics," (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

[116] Jagat S. Mehta, *Rescuing the future: bequeathed misperceptions in international relations* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2008), 105.

India, four additional factors compound this angst and, consequentially, facilitated the proliferation of the myth about its strategic debility.

First, India's prolonged colonial experience, whether under Islamic or Western rule, continuously fed a strategic narrative of insecurity and vulnerability in face of external incursions into the subcontinent.[117] Ram Madhav, of the nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and adviser to India's current Prime Minister N. Modi, therefore observes that,

> *…we are driven by a romanticist attitude of peace, love, etc. when what we actually need is a strategic culture. India was invaded by successive waves of hordes for more than 2000 years through one mountain pass called the Khyber Pass. Why has no Indian king ever thought of sealing that pass to prevent the invasions? That is where the difference in strategic cultures stands. That is why we can't even seal our borders with Bangladesh.[118]*

Similarly, recalling the Indian defeat against China in 1962, the director of the Intelligence Bureau at the time, B. N. Mullik lamented that "India did not have the same range of thinking and the same system as was prevalent in China, and which proved more successful," and attributed this to the history of foreign rule on the subcontinent.[119]

Second, unlike in the United States and other democracies, India's highly insulated and often also invisible diplomatic and security decision-making processes further feeds the narrative about its policies being "reactionary," reflecting a thoughtless, impulsive or ideological nature. First under the "shadow" of Nehru, and then under that of his successor or influential bureaucrats, this lead to an unusually low electoral salience of

---

[117] V. P. Menon notes that despite being "one geographical entity … throughout her long and chequered history, [India] never achieved political homogeneity … mutual jealousies and conflicts made the country an easy prey to any organized invasion." Vapal P. Menon, *Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1956), 7.

[118] "We need a new strategic culture," http://organiser.org/Encyc/2012/12/3/We-need-a-new-strategic-culture.aspx. See also Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 259.

[119] B. N. Mullik, *My years with Nehru: the Chinese betrayal* (Bombay: Allied, 1971), 591-2.

foreign affairs, unlike in other regional or great powers.[120] When K. Subrahmanyam thus spoke about an Indian "strategic deficit," he was not questioning the acumen of its leaders and bureaucrats to plan and implement policies, but denouncing weak institutionalization as reflecting a "vested interest among the Indian political class to discourage the development of strategic thinking."[121]

Third, India's strategic angst has been further inflated in the last two decades by domestic politics and the unprecedented veto-power of regional and other smaller parties on foreign affairs.[122] Former diplomat an UN Under-Secretary General Shashi Tharoor thus expresses his concern that India's increasingly "fractious" and "chaotic democracy" may be hampering the country's ability to think, prepare and efficiently execute coherent foreign policies.[123] Similarly, Sunil Khilnani questions whether India, as "a relatively new democratic state," will "manage to concentrate its will to the degree required to achieve long-term goals."[124]

Finally, the formidable rise of an increasingly assertive China across the Himalayas in recent years, compounded by the continued border conflict and military tensions with Beijing, have further encouraged Indian angst and hysteria about the country's alleged strategic deficiencies. In this view, China benefits from its autocratic regime, which

---

[120] On India's comparatively "low electoral salience of foreign policy and the high encapsulation of the central foreign affairs and defense bureaucracies," see V. Narang and P. Staniland, "Institutions and Worldviews in Indian Foreign Security Policy," *India Review* 11, no. 2 (2012). For a similar argument: Pratap B. Mehta, "Still Under Nehru's Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India," *India Review* 8, no. 3 (2009).

[121] He further notes that "in the absence of a structured national security decision-making apparatus, leaders tend to be influenced by parochial and short-term political considerations," Subrahmanyam, *Shedding Shibboleths*, 26, see also 3-17.

[122] Discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

[123] Shashi Tharoor, *Pax Indica* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 154, 57.

[124] Sunil Khilnani, "India's Rise: the Search for wealth and power in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 692.

exudes centralization, decisiveness, clarity and cohesion – all criteria on which democratic India is seen to fall short on. This may sometimes manifest as a direct "China envy" but is normally articulated with resource to indirect metaphors: India, the slow-moving, passive elephant that is being overtaken by the aggressive and flexible Chinese dragon.[125]

The poverty of historiography

Secondly, the mythology about India's lacking strategic culture has also proliferated because of an extraordinary poverty of historical research. While even scholarship in Western democracies has battled against the politics of secrecy, the Indian state's incapacity to preserve its records and its unwillingness to make them accessible to the public finds no parallel among its peers.[126]

India's Public Records Act mandates that government files go through a declassification process and transferred to the National Archives of India, or other publically accessible institutions, after thirty years.[127] Such regulations have been, however, ignored for decades, making it virtually impossible for any scholar to conduct primary research on India's diplomatic and strategic practice. The official compilation of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's documents provides scholars with an extraordinary asset to

---

[125] For a critique of such comparisons: Tanvi Madan, "China's Marathon is India's Triathlon," *Brookings UpFront*, Feb. 4, 2013: http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/02/04-india-china-madan.

[126] For a comparative perspective: Michael P Colaresi, *Democracy Declassified: The Secrecy Dilemma in National Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[127] http://nationalarchives.nic.in/writereaddata/html_en_files/html/public_records93.html. On the problems in archival preservation, see https://dinyarpatel.com/category/indian-archives-and-libraries/.

understand his politics and policies, but as of 2015, its most recent published volume barely covered the year of 1959.[128]

Official war histories are rare, and a crucial report on the 1962 war with China remains classified.[129] Diplomatic records from the Ministry of External Affairs only began to be made accessible in the 1990s, and only in a very limited number, mostly on procedural issues involving India's diplomatic missions abroad. Amongst many other voices, S. Tharoor has thus decried the negative effect of such a lack of historical sources on Indian scholarship and the public debate:

> *The lack of a coherent and effective declassification policy compounds this problem [of policy-relevant research]. It is difficult for analysts to understand Indian foreign policy making from Indian sources, as the analysts have no legitimate access to such sources or to any documentation at all, other than material of historical value (though even many in that category have not been declassified.[130]*

Across a variety of sectors, scholars and diplomats have made similar observations, asking the Indian government to review and upgrade its declassification processes, and underlining the costs of the lack of historiography on the country's foreign policy, defense and security planning.[131]

The importance of the past in shaping current decision-makers' policies has been widely studied, with particular reference to the importance of analogies, and underlines how

---

[128] The volumes have recently made available, in digital format, at http://nehruportal.nic.in.

[129] The Henderson Brooks-Bhagat report remains classified. Neville Maxwell, "Henderson Brooks Report: An Introduction," *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 14/15 (2001).

[130] Tharoor, *Pax Indica*, 342.

[131] On military history and the defence sector see Anit Mukherjee, "Tell it like it is," The Times of India, June 9, 2010: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/edit-page/Tell-It-Like-It-Is/articleshow/6024645.cms; and Srinath Raghavan, "Commemorating the 1965 War Is a Good Idea, the Proposed 'Victory Carnival' Isn't," The Wire, July 14, 2015: http://thewire.in/6323/commemorating-the-1965-war-is-a-good-idea-the-proposed-victory-carnival-isnt. For a view by a retired Indian Foreign Service officer, see Jaimini Bhagwati, "Foreign policy, declassified," Rediff, Feb. 21, 2014: http://www.rediff.com/news/column/foreign-policy-declassified/20140221.htm.

diplomatic and strategic historiographies can facilitate learning and greater efficiency through transmission of memory.[132] When asked why he read Greek classics like Plutarch to help him in complex decision-making, U.S. President Harry S. Truman noted that "the only thing new in the world is the history you don't know."[133]

However late, over the last decade, this has lead to unprecedented change, as successive Indian governments started to accelerate declassification, with the Ministry of External Affairs alone transferring thousands of records to the National Archives.[134] Such new openness contributed to a thriving new historiographical scholarship on Indian foreign policy, defense and strategic issues, and this dissertation hopes to contribute to this growing literature.[135] The consequent "archival turn" allow a new generation of scholars to develop new insights on how India's decision-making and policy processes operated in *practice* and, based on empirical and historical proof, contest the ossified conjectures about the role of idealism or about the alleged absence of Indian strategic thought.[136]

---

[132] See, e.g. Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[133] Quoted in http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2009/spring/truman-history.html.

[134] For a list of more than 60,000 files recently transferred to the National Archives of India, see http://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/national-archive-new.pdf. Private papers of Indian political leaders and officials have also been made available at the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, in New Delhi: http://www.nehrumemorial.nic.in/en/archives/catalogue-of-private-papers.html. The Association of Indian Diplomats and the Indian Council of World Affairs have also made extraordinary efforts to compile and publish oral histories with retired Indian Foreign Service officials: http://www.associationdiplomats.org/publications/ifaj/ifajgeneral.htm.

[135] Scholars who have used these new archival materials for research on Indian foreign and security policies, after 1947, include Rakesh Ankit, Manu Bhagwan, Nicolas Blarel, Rudra Chaudhuri, Alexander Davis, David Engerman, Amit Das Gupta, Andreas Hilger, Yogesh Joshi, Andrew Kennedy, Raphaelle Khan, Tanvi Madan, Paul McGarr, Anit Mukherjee, Swapna K. Nayudu, Pallavi Raghavan, Srinath Raghavan, Jayita Sarkar, Zorawar D. Singh, Vineet Thakur.

[136] See, for example, the observation on how lack of archival history has been "complicit in the construction of the narrative that Nehruvian foreign policy was weak, too focused on immaterial things … or childlike," Alexander E. Davis, "An Archival Turn for International Relations: Interrogating India's Diplomatic History from the Postcolonial Archive," paper presented at the ISA Global South Caucus, Singapore, January 2015, pp. 5-6: http://goo.gl/BxHAav.

Yet, even when taking on a historical angle, foreign policy studies of the early period tend to be biased towards the "great man" approach, concentrating on the correspondence of J. Nehru.[137] However determinant, especially in public, focusing excessively on his role often misses the variety of other bureaucratic cultures and personalities that also shaped India's foreign relations, and to whom the Indian Prime Minister often deferred significant decision-making power.[138]

The ossified speech: academia, ideology and politics

Finally, while driven by democratic hysteria or the poverty of historiography, the myth of a lacking or deficient Indian strategic culture has also had a devastating impact on scholarship in India over the recent decades.[139] In the United States, quantitative and data-focused academia is currently being reproached for being detached from practice and reality, and various analysts have bemoaned how the scholar-practitioner, or theory-policy gap has widened, with detrimental effects to American strategic culture.[140]

In India, the result is the same, albeit for different reasons. Such a gap was relatively narrow in India up to the late 1960s, when governments attempted to promote a higher education environment that could contribute to improve policy-making: the School of

---

[137] See, for example, Andrew Kennedy, *The international ambitions of Mao and Nehru: national efficacy beliefs and the making of foreign policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[138] As explored in this dissertation, through the views of Indian officers posted at missions in Kathmandu, Colombo and Rangoon in the 1950s-60s. For a similar methodology, see Alexander E. Davis and Vineet Thakur, "Walking the Thin Line: India's Anti-Racist Diplomatic Practice in South Africa, Canada, and Australia, 1946–55," *The International History Review* 38, no. 5 (2016).

[139] For a general critique of the state of the field and its challenges: Muthiah Alagappa, "Strengthening International Studies in India: Vision and Recommendations," *International Studies* 46, no. 1-2 (2009). See also articles in the same issue, by Amitabh Mattoo, Varun Sahni, Devika Sharma, Rajesh Basrur, Kanti Bajpai, T. V. Paul, C. Raja Mohan, and Siddharth Mallavarapu.

[140] For a classic introduction to these challenges, see Alexander L. George, *Bridging the gap: theory and practice in foreign policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993).

International Studies, at Jawaharlal Nehru University, reflected such an initiative and played an important role in several policy debates, bringing scholars and practitioners together, and also cultivating a debate with their international peers.[141] After the 1970s, however, the gap progressively widened and transformed into today's abyss.

In a 2013 address at India's 3rd International Studies Convention, in New Delhi, India's NSA S. S. Menon thus offered a scathing critique of IR studies in India and of a widening theory-practice gap, based on what he saw as: 1) "post-modern emphasis on narrative and discourse", unintelligible to practitioners; 2) Western-centric focus, ignorant of India's strategic history; 3) an excessive focus on micro-issues, myopic and unrealistic to policy-makers confronted with complex contexts; and 4) a flawed scientific ambition, neglecting the flexible, artistic and contingent dimensions of diplomacy and strategy. [142] Three processes explain why and how the Indian academic world of IR gradually separated from policy and practice over the last decades.

First, bereft of historical and other empirical evidence, and forced to focus on the analysis of speech instead, the discipline veered methodologically into over-theorization. Whether under the post-modernist, post-colonial or constructivist mantle, discourse analysis and interpretative inference proliferated, and theory has become an end, rather than a mean to explain Indian state behavior. Indian IR has thud often excelled in global debates

---

[141] First established as the Indian School of International Studies, in October 1955, following recommendations of a government committee headed by H. N. Kunzru. A. Appadorai served as the first director. Over the following decades, the School would host influential policy dialogues with visiting professors, including H. Morgenthau, H. Bull, and K. Waltz, besides government officials.

[142] Dec. 11, 2013: http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22632/.

about IR theory, but hardly engaged the *practice* of the Indian state or contributed to a clearer understanding of Indian foreign policy.[143]

Second, deprived of any practical and historical understanding of how "diplomacy" and "strategy" operates in practice, the discipline gradually divorced from realism, identified as a status quo, Western-centric, and immoral approach to international politics. Rather than studying the state, the discipline embraced the ideological mission to revise and reform it, in a "critical" effort that professed a principled aversion to power prior even to understanding how it operates in practice. By seeking to contest the state, Indian IR has thus embraced an activist stance marked by hostility, which deters younger scholars to understand the specific constraints and contingencies shaping policy.[144]

Finally, rather than contributing to, and shaping the public debate on foreign policy, Indian IR quickly turned into a political battleground, hostage to spurts of mudslinging between acolytes of Nehru's enlightened "exceptionalism" on the one hand, and nationalist and other critics of his "idealism" as a malign burden. Any scholarly output on Indian foreign policy is therefore prone to be immediately engulfed by an ideological, partisan and false that pits "Nehruvians" against "nationalists."

---

[143] This focus has, however, developed into an excellent Indian disciplinary contribution to the various debates on *theories* of International Relations. For a comprehensive overview, see Kanti P Bajpai and Siddharth Mallavarapu, eds., *International Relations in India: Bringing theory back home*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2005); Kanti Bajpai and Siddharth Mallavarapu, eds., *International Relations in India: Theorising the region and nation*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2005).

[144] For a critique of how realism has been side-lined by prevailing liberal, Marxist, post-colonial, constructivist and other critical theories in Indian IR, see Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Realism and Indian Foreign Policy," in *New Directions in Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. Amitabh Mattoo and Happymon Jacob (New Delhi: Haranand, 2013).

<u>b) Realigning speech and practice</u>

The devastating impact of the mythological narrative about idealism and the alleged lack of an Indian strategic culture also affected government officials, who over the last decades have become prisoners of the poverty of the public debate. If idealism is seen as the opposite of realism, and if India's alleged liberal democratic "values" are seen as coming in the way of its "security interests," how can today's Indian leaders or diplomats effectively articulate a policy that defends Nepal's democratization as being in the long-term interest of India? How can Indian officials and scholars possibly counter Western assertions that their country is a "reluctant" newcomer to liberal interventionism and democracy promotion, when they are oblivious to their country's monumental efforts to democratize Nepal in the 1950s, defend humanitarian rights during its 1971 humanitarian in Bangladesh, and promote conflict resolution in Sri Lanka in the 1980s?

The poverty of Indian strategic memory, and the hysteric self-criticality of its democratic public sphere have thus constrained India's own strategic vocabulary, with its officials often conceptually struggling to articulate their own policies. This communicative deficiency was diagnosed as early as 1981, by K. Subrahmanyam: the "sophisticated, eclectic blend of policies and values underlying the Indian pursuit of national interest," he observed, are not always understood by outside powers "because of the confusing verbiage employed by India," which leads "some of them conclude that the inchoateness of our policy as they see it is because of the peculiar Hindu view of the world."[145]

---

[145] Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 250-51. P. N. Haksar also observes that "our [Indian] alleged spirituality to which we took course and the aura of mysticism which attracted the alienated and distraught of the Western world did not help to promote any deeper understanding of our country … we ourselves have contributed little," Haksar, *Problems*, 2.

More worrisome is the possibility that this conceptual poverty may have had reverse effects on India's strategic practice. Former diplomat K. S. Bajpai alludes to this possibility:

> *We have neglected to develop either the conceptual or mechanical apparatus needed to cope with the role of power in world affairs and … unless we do so, urgently and extensively, we cannot be as effective as our size, situation and resources, not least the talents of our people, ought to have made us long since. (…) [The] Slogans of non-alignment, third-world solidarity, anti-imperialism … [were] even at best of times … substitutes for thought; now they stifle thought.[146]*

Similarly, strategic analyst C. R. Mohan recalls that while Nehru had been, overall, "extremely conscious of preserving and pursuing India's interests in a pragmatic manner," his moral rhetoric degenerated under his successors into a "mantra" of "ideological accents" that "begun to distort Indian diplomacy."[147]

This possibility further underlines the importance of scholarly enterprises seeking to realign India's strategic speech and practice. P. N. Haksar had, in the mid-1980s, rung alarm bells about the expanding "hiatus" between public perception and diplomatic reality, and the dangers of India's exceptionalist speech hindering a clearer understanding of its practice. In a lecture to New Delhi's bureaucratic intelligentsia, in 1986, he thus noted that:

> *…for us to perceive [Indian foreign policy] in realistic terms, it has to be cleared of the entire gamut of ideas and emotions (particularly emotions) which we have gathered around rather simple words, such as [the] 'Non-Aligned Movement'. These are 'outer garments' of all great powers' foreign policy, which must be shed for better practice and analysis.[148]*

Despite such warnings, however, little has changed. A quarter of a century later, National Security Adviser S. S. Menon would reiterate a similar concern, noting in 2012 that "we

---

[146] Bajpai, "Engaging," 75, 83.

[147] Mohan, *Rubicon*, 261.

[148] June, 10, 1986, at the India International Centre, in New Delhi: Haksar, *Problems*, 55.

must encourage our own ways of looking at developments, and develop our own strategic culture, vocabulary and doctrine," especially because "others tell us that the articulation of our policies is normative, moralistic and academic, even in explaining [our] acts of *realpolitik*."[149] In a quest to excavate such realist foundations of strategic practice, Menon noted, for example, the importance of studying the Indian approach to the use of force, so often publically described as an anathema to India's pacifist image.[150]

Such a practitioners' view is confirmed by recent scholarly forays into Indian foreign policy noting that despite electoral insulation, political change and institutional constraints, a "remarkable continuity runs through the thinking of Indian strategic elites," which calls for "deeper historical studies of the roots of [India's] strategic worldviews."[151] S. Khilnani characterizes this approach as a "reason of state perspective," which assumes that the modern Indian state, from the colonial *Raj* period onwards, is "in possession of a stable set of rational interests across time."[152] This dissertation seeks to contribute to this perspective, by focusing on patterns of continuity in the strategic practice of the Indian state towards its neighbors.

---

[149] Dec. 11, 2013, in New Delhi: http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22632/.

[150] Oct. 21, speaking on "The Role of Force in Strategic Affairs," at the National Defence College, in New Delhi: there is a "long Indian tradition which has regarded the use of [defensive] force as legitimate in certain circumstances, namely, if there is no alternative way of securing justice." He thus calls for "studying the Indian way, the Indian view and Indian practice in the use and role of force in statecraft," Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2010* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2011), 85, 88.

[151] "…the basic priorities of Indian elites remain the same," based on a "strategic core." Narang and Staniland, "Institutions and Worldviews in Indian Foreign Security Policy," 77, 91.

[152] Khilnani, "India's Rise," 692.

3. From the *Raj* to the Republic: India's regional strategy

> *India can learn from its diplomatic history only when it ends the pretence that our global engagement began at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947. Independent India eagerly embraced the many instruments inherited from the Raj for the conduct of India's foreign relations. Post-colonial Delhi also held on to many principles of British India's foreign policy.*[153]

C. Raja Mohan

In no other foreign policy area is the gap between India's strategic rhetoric and practice as wide as in its neighborhood. The official and public discourse insists on principles such as non-interference and portrays India as a benign power that is often misunderstood by its neighbors or must resist becoming boxed in by hostile extra-regional powers. The sparse scholarship, on the other hand, simplistically defines India's regional strategy as driven by hegemonic realism − reflexively inherited from the British *Raj* − and therefore an exception to its otherwise idealist impulses.

Both such narratives run counter to what is known about India's *practice* in the region, and which will inform this dissertation's empirical chapters on how successive governments, under different leaders and political parties, dealt with regime crises in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, from the 1950s to the 2000s. On the one hand, India interfered in Nepal (1950-51), coercively imposing a regime change there. How does that conform to the advocated principle of non-interference and India's supposed idealism? On the other hand, India's involvement in Nepal (1950s) and Sri Lanka (1980s) indicates that beyond just reflexive realist "security interests" to maximize power, New Delhi may have also been driven by an attempt to encourage liberalization in those countries. How does that conform to the scholarly consensus that India's approach to the region is driven by

---

[153] C. Raja Mohan, "Heritage Clause," *The Indian Express*, Aug. 24, 2009: http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/heritage-clause/506011/0.

hardnosed realism and has no space for "democracy promotion"? As suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, a simplistic "idealism" versus "realism" approach fails to grasp the possible connections between security and liberalism in India's strategic culture.

In the quest to understand the foundations of Indian strategic culture towards the region, and its consequent patterns of involvement, one must therefore begin by examining its pre-independence roots. Path-breaking work has recently shed light on Indian "indigenous" strategic thought, most notably in Kautilya's monumental *Arthashastra* treatise during the Maurya empire (ca. 300-150 BCE), which is often compared to that of China's Sun Tzu and Europe's Machiavelli.[154]

Similar historical incursions have been made into the medieval and early modern periods, in particular on the Southern and Central Indian Chola, Vijayanagar and Maratha empires.[155] Innovative insights on the Mughal Empire, in particular at its 16th century apogee, have further expanded our understanding of the pre-colonial elements in Indian strategic thought.[156] While these attempts to recover "indigenous" roots are ideologically soothing for a post-colonial nation, their deep historical incursions pose a methodological problem in terms of process tracing and causal linkage: the deeper they excavate in time, the more difficult it becomes to prove that past concepts, for example Kautilya's *mandala* theory, determine the thinking of today's Indian decision-maker, several centuries or even millennia later.

---

[154] On Kautilya's *Arthashastra* see, for example, the excellent recent project on "Indigenous Historical Knowledge" at the government-funded Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses: P. K. Gautam et al., eds., *Indigenous historical knowledge: Kautilya and his vocabulary* (New Delhi: Pentagon, 2015).

[155] Manjeet S. Pardesi, *Deducing India's grand strategy of regional hegemony from historical and conceptual perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 2005).

[156] Jayashree Vivekanandan, *Interrogating international relations: India's strategic practice and the return of history* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).

While such excellent efforts are welcome, and should continue, our immediate focus must go to the colonial *Raj* as the modern precursor of independent India. Reflecting a natural process in the historiography of a proud post-colonial nation, India's IR community has dedicated extraordinary little attention to identify continuities between the colonial and independent state's foreign and security policies.

a) Roots in the Raj: Security, Liberalism and Non-Interference

The modern Indian state gradually developed after the 17th century, first as a commercial enterprise under the East India Company (EIC), which partially coopted the preceding Mughal and Maratha empires, and then morphed throughout the 19th century into a full colonial state, which emerged, after 1857, as the *Raj*. At the heart of this colonial enterprise lay a tension between security interests and liberal principles, reflected in a persistent British debate on the risks of interference in India's autochthonous polities.

Asia's pivot: Expanding security imperatives

As an economic project, the EIC's rise was initially contingent on its capacity to locally generate fiscal revenue in order to expand military power and ensure its security. A rich literature details this British quest for regional predominance, control and stability, and how the EIC's extractive nature forced it into an expansionist spiral after the 1820, with a succession of military campaigns into the frontier areas and beyond, including into the Punjab, Sindh, Afghanistan, and Burma. Overstretched and faced with growing internal

instability and social unrest, this eventually caused the 1857 revolt and its replacement by the *Raj*'s imperial institutions.[157]

The security dimension of this new *Raj* thus split. Internally, on the subcontinent, it inherited the EIC's mechanisms to extend its influence into the myriad of princely states, especially the subsidiary alliance system and Britain's role as the subcontinent's paramount power.[158] As historian C. A. Bayly notes, the "foundations of British rule in India consisted not only in direct administration but in the creation of a flexible and expert diplomatic system among its subordinate allies and dependents (…) [as well as on] the further development of the residency system, an embryonic Indian political service and a series of techniques for neutralizing disaffected Indian states".[159]

From the late 19th century onwards, however, it also became clear that the *Raj*'s survival relied increasingly on its capability to control the external environment, beyond the subcontinent. The security of India thus became dependent on a wider context, leading to a variety of intermediary "ring fence" or "buffer" states that separated and protected the subcontinent from the extra-regional influence of Russia and China.[160] Referring to the pivotal importance of Tibet, Viceroy Curzon thus observed, in 1904, that India:

---

[157] On how the EIC's "insecurity on its extended frontiers and the desire to seize new revenues encouraged expansion" and "squeezing the Indian states for tribute" lead to "internal revolt," see C. A. Bayly, *Indian society and the making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 120.

[158] First introduced by Lord Wellesley, Governor-General from 1798 to 1805. Through the system of "subsidiary alliance," in return for a tax, an EIC representative ("resident") would be posted in the state with a military force to protect it from internal threats and external aggression: Bayly, *Indian Society*, 110-11. See also Michael H. Fisher, "Indirect Rule in the British Empire: The Foundations of the Residency System in India (1764-1858)," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 3 (1984).

[159] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 110.

[160] In 1902, Foreign Secretary Lansdowne, ex-Vice Roy of India (1884-94), defined a "buffer zone" as "an intervening zone sufficient to prevent direct contact between the dominions of Great Britain [the *Raj*] and those of other great military powers," quoted in Sneh Mahajan, "The foreign policy of the Raj and its Legacy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 53.

is like a fortress with the vast moat of the sea on two of her faces and with mountains for her walls on the remainder. … [On Tibet as a buffer zone] We do not want to occupy it, but also we cannot afford to see it occupied by our foes... That is the secret of the whole [Indian] position in [relation to] Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet, and as far eastwards as Siam. He would be a short-sighted commander who merely manned his ramparts in India and did not look beyond[161]

As the Asian pivot of Britain's imperial project, India's geopolitical importance thus kept increasing, leading to the development of a series of military and diplomatic institutions that implemented policies with considerable autonomy from London. By the 1920, as the *Raj* reached the apogee of its territorial expansion, the security India had become tantamount to the security of Asia, from Southern Africa to Eastern China.[162]

---

[161] March 30, in a budget speech, on foreign affairs, quoted in Thomas Raleigh, ed. *Lord Curzon in India; being a selection from his speeches as viceroy & Governor-general of India, 1898-1905* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 408.

[162] On the wider frontiers of the British Raj, beyond the subcontinent, see Robert J. Blyth, *The empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858-1947* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj : the frontier cadre, 1904-1947* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997); Sneh Mahajan, *British foreign policy, 1874-1914: the role of India* (London: Routledge, 2002); Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial connections: India in the Indian Ocean arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

Map 1: The British Raj at its height (1923)[163]
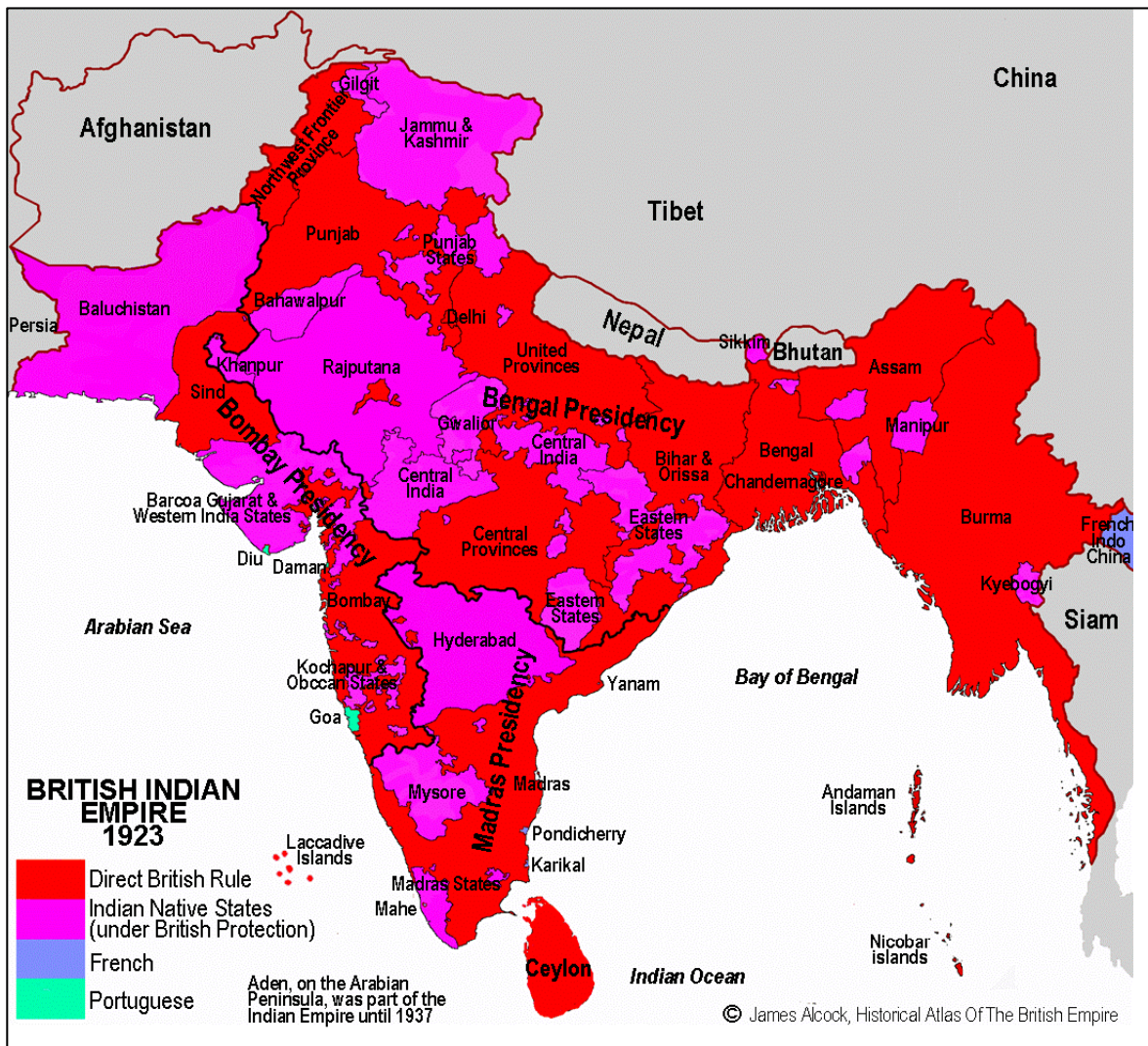
Missionary zeal: Deepening liberal principles

Besides its extractive commercial and security purposes, the Raj was, however, also driven by a tacit ideological mission, which shaped its policies and laid the liberal foundations of modern India. For example, historian C. A. Bayly notes that, as early as the 18th century, "through carefully selected tutors, [British] residents began to implant

---

[163] Source: http://www.atlasofbritempire.com/height-of-empire.html

83

western notions of 'progressive' government in the minds of their Indian charges."[164] As a consequence, after the 1857 political reforms, "a succession of English-educated *rajas* and *diwans* (…) more effectively promoted British interests in their respective states than any number of interfering early-nineteenth century [British] residents."[165] The ideas of representative responsibility were persistently communicated to local Indian rulers, further driving the liberal spirit into the subcontinent.[166]

However colonial, conservative and orientalist – based on the idea that Indian society was medieval and despotic, and therefore unfit for representative democracy and self-rule – after 1857 the *Raj* kept sowing the seeds of its own demise through a variety of legal, social, economic, administrative and institutional reforms.[167] At the same time, Anglicized Indian elites imported and adapted liberal values to the Indian context, demanding political reforms, greater autonomy, civic rights and representation, which culminated in a mass freedom struggle for self-rule after the 1930s and negotiations for independence after the end of World War II. This was particularly visible when the Indian National

---

[164] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 111.

[165] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 197.

[166] V. P. Menon recalls the impact of this rhetoric: "Successive viceroys laid emphasis upon the duties and responsibilities of the rulers. The classic instance was the speech of Lord Curzon at the installation of the ruler of Bahawalpur. He exhorted the Indian ruler to be 'the servant as well as the master of his people'; emphasized that 'his revenues are not secured to him for his own selfish gratification but for the good of his subjects'; avowed that 'his internal administration is only exempt from correction in proportion as it is honest'; advised him that 'his *gaddi* is not intended to be a divan of indulgence but the stern seat of duty';" Menon, *Integration*, 14. See also S. R. Ashton, *British policy towards the Indian States, 1905-1939* (London: Curzon Press, 1982); C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[167] On tensions between British arguments about providential presence, however conservative and based on "[medieval] ordering difference" e.g. based on "durbar model" emulating Mughal practices, and the liberal spirit of the legal system, for example via the Ibert bill (1882-3), see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 186-91, 203-14. See also Francis G. Hutchins, *The illusion of permanence: British imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

Congress imposed various representative clauses on the princely states.[168] The liberal dimension of the *Raj*, and its influence on independent India's democratic institutions has developed into a thriving body of literature.[169]

Reflecting how deep these liberal principles were ingrained in the Indian elites' political thinking at the time of independence, V. P. Menon, who after 1946 helped negotiate the incorporation of hundreds of princely and other states from the *Raj*, recalls that "the new Government of India could not possibly uphold the idea of autocracy in [such] states," because such a system represented an anathema to the new republic's liberal identity.[170]

Security, liberalism and the dilemmas of interference

The *Raj*'s internal security imperatives and its liberal principles often came into tension, animating a strident debate on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of India's native and neighboring states. As V. P. Menon would later recall, the British had to walk a thin line: while, on the one hand, and in principle, they strived to avoid the temptation of over-interference (fearing hostile opposition, entanglement and overstretching their resources in political micromanagement), on the other hand, and in

---

[168] 1918: Montagu-Chelmsford Report and reforms institutionalize relations with states, especially by uniformization, leading to creation of Chamber of Princes. 1935: Government of India Act with a Council of State and House of Assembly, differentiating provinces and states, leading to elections in 1937. 1946: clash between new Constituent Assembly and Chamber of Princes (states). In 1947, the Indian National Congress expected that that at least 50% of states' representatives should be elected: Menon, *Integration*, 17-18, 23-24, 51-2. See also Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian princes and their states* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[169] Beyond the works referenced above, see also Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: the origins of an Asian democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985); Harald Fischer-Tine and Michael Mann, eds., *Colonialism as civilizing mission: cultural ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); Mithi Mukherjee, *India in the shadows of empire: a legal and political history, 1774-1950* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and empire: India in British liberal thought* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[170] "For their very existence, their rulers had to have either the support of their people, or the protection of the Government of India The former the rulers generally lacked; the latter had automatically terminated with the lapse of paramountcy" Menon, *Integration*, 329. See also Ian Copland, *The princes of India in the endgame of empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229-87.

practice, they could also not avoid the luxury of under-interference (risking loss of control, instability spilling-over into British territory, and rising external influence from rival powers).[171]

The dilemma was compounded by the moral impulse to spread liberalism, especially when such despotic regimes faced internal opposition and unrest.[172] In 1859, for example, J. S. Mill thus berated the East India Company for having supported despotic rule in the North Indian state of Awadh (Oude) for almost a century, and welcomed the *Raj*'s decision to "fulfill[ing] the obligation it had so long before incurred, of giving to the people of Oude a tolerable government" as a "tardy discharge of an imperative duty."[173]

The colonial foundations of such liberal dilemmas of non-interference on the subcontinent are elegantly encapsulated in an 1835 speech by acting Governor-General Charles Metcalfe, on "Duty towards native states - Interference and Non-Interference."[174] In what could have been the analysis of J. Nehru or of any succeeding Indian Prime Minister, he recognized that, "as the predominant power in India, interference is sometimes forced on us," but also emphasized the "wide difference

---

[171] Menon, *Integration*. Bayly also recalls the negative experience of excessive interference under the EIC, which faced repeated rebellions (Marathas 1770s, Awadh 1797, Rajputs 1820-30s) after the British had attempted to impose their own nominees on the thrones of princely states "in violation of the sense of the neighbourhood and the dominant alliances in local polities." Bayly, *Indian Society*, 171.

[172] On the debate on interference in the mid-19th century, between those defending sates' autonomy even if ruled despotically, and those defending states' annexation to spread liberal rule and enforce control e.g. when mismanaged or "doctrine of lapse," and the consequent the creation of the Political Department and Indian Political Service as "a government within a government" which encroached on states' internal sovereignty to varying degrees, see Menon, *Integration*, 9-13.

[173] John Stuart Mill, "A few words on non-intervention," *New England Review* 27, no. 3 (2006 [1859]): 260.

[174] Aug. 14: John William Kaye, ed. *Selections from the papers of Lord Metcalfe* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1855), 237-44.

between a reluctant interference, when it is unavoidable, and a disposition to rush into interference when it is not necessary."[175]

In defense of non-interference as a default policy, Metcalfe prudently described the infinite risks of foreign involvement, including the danger of weakening local institutions, costly overextension, popular animosity, and escalatory involvement by rival powers – a list which reads just like a contemporary realist case against interventionism.[176] He also, however, delineated specific conditions warranting intervention, which reflected both concerns about security (e.g. "general disturbance produced by internal disorder" that spills over to British provinces) and about the effects of illiberal rule ("prolonged anarchy, with its evil consequences to the people," "extreme misrule and oppression," and "unjust usurpation [of power], devoid of legitimate claim, or opposed to the choice of the people".[177] These latter conditions reflect the early liberal nature of Indian strategic thought on the subcontinent.

With its territorial expansion after the late 19th century, the *Raj* developed a wide spectrum of security and legal instruments to institutionalize its relations with the states in its geostrategic protection belt. While liberal concerns were less salient than they had been on the subcontinent towards the princely states, the key principle remained: the sovereignty of these buffer states was limited, contingent on their cooperative (or, at least, neutral) security posture towards India. This was particularly apparent in the conflicted

---

[175] He defines this issue as the "most difficult of any in Indian policy; but interference is so likely to do evil, and so little certain of doing good, that it ought … to be avoided as much as possible." Kaye, *Selections from the papers of Lord Metcalfe*, 237.

[176] For example, on the danger of creating a precedent: "[we often] twist our obligation of protection against enemies into a right to interfere in the internal affairs of protected States." Kaye, *Selections from the papers of Lord Metcalfe*, 239.

[177] Kaye, *Selections from the papers of Lord Metcalfe*, 239-40.

relations between the *Raj* and the Kingdom of Nepal, which underwent a succession of crises until stabilizing in the 1920s.[178]

Against the background of Asia's new "Great Game," in 1904 Viceroy Curzon thus articulated how Tibet − or any other state crucial to the protection of India − was expected to condition its sovereignty to the *Raj*'s superior security interests:

> *I would suffer any imputation sooner than be an unfaithful sentinel at my post, or allow the future peace of this country to be compromised by encroachment from the outside as to whose meaning there cannot be any question. If the Tibetan Government is wise it will realise that the interests of Indian defence and the friendship of the Indian Government are entirely compatible with the continued independence and autonomy of Tibet, so far as these may be said at present to exist. But it should also realise that they are incompatible with the predominance of any other foreign influence, carrying with it insecurity on our frontier and adding gratuitously to our cadres.[179]*

Whether on the subcontinent or in the frontier regions around South Asia, the *Raj*'s quest for security thus developed in tandem with a strategic culture that made prudent but determined use of political interference and, if necessary, military intervention.

b) The post-colonial republic: Revolution in speech, continuity in practice

To what extent did the *Raj*'s strategic legacy transit to the independent Republic of India? In terms of strategic *practice* in the region, there are indications of tremendous continuity, both on the security and liberal fronts. Despite a new geopolitical context, post-1947

---

[178] The Kingdom of Nepal thus "had more independence than any of the princely states of India [Hydarabad] but had less than a completely sovereign Asian State [Thailand]," Asad Husain, *British India's relations with the Kingdom of Nepal, 1857-1947: a diplomatic history of Nepal* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), 56. For historical antecedents (and limits) of Nepal playing off China against the Indian Raj, see Leo E. Rose, *Nepal: strategy for survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 102-15. The 1923 Nepal-Britain Treaty recognized Nepal as a sovereign state, but with limitations: for example, Kathmandu's military imports were contingent on British satisfaction "that the intentions of the Nepal Government are friendly and that there is no immediate danger to India from such importations," (Article 5: http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1925/TS0031.pdf).

[179] March 30, 1904, budget speech: Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India*, 409.

Indian officials applied much of the *Raj*'s thinking on subcontinental security, order and interference to their country's foreign policy towards the neighbors in Nepal, Ceylon and Burma. This hypothesis will be examined in this dissertation's empirical chapters.

In terms of strategic *rhetoric*, however, India's post-colonial leadership adopted a revolutionary posture, distancing itself from the *Raj* by describing it as an immoral imperial project that represented the worst of Western power politics. For public and domestic consumption, such political speech was revisionist, idealist and exceptionalist, and described independent India's foreign policy as a righteous quest to overcome the bellicose nature of international politics. This divergence posed a significant impediment for the development of a body of scholarship and public debate on the regional dimension of India's strategic culture.

The continuity of strategic practice

In terms of strategic practice towards the region, independent India largely inherited the legacy of the *Raj*, despite partition with Pakistan and a changed geopolitical context.[180] The new state's bureaucratic and military apparatus was, in effect, the continuation of the former.[181] Candidly acknowledging this inheritance, V. P. Menon noted that the modern Indian state was the outcome of a colonial enterprise, which had established "a political

---

[180] For a similar argument on such continuity, see T. A. Keenleyside, "Diplomatic apprenticeship: pre-independence origins of Indian diplomacy and its relevance for the post-independence foreign policy," *India Quarterly* 432(1987).

[181] On the organizational background of modern India's administrative, bureaucratic and military apparatus, see Terence Creagh Coen, *The Indian political service: a study in indirect rule* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971); B. B. Misra, *The administrative history of India, 1834-1947* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); Philip Woodruff, *The men who ruled India* (London: J. Cape, 1953); David Gilmour, *The ruling caste : imperial lives in the Victorian Raj* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006); Partha Sarathi Gupta and Anirudh Deshpande, *The British Raj and its Indian armed forces, 1857-1939* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

and administrative system hitherto unknown to Indian history" that was "impersonal…

[and based on] a regular and uniform system of administration composed of a hierarchy

of authorities, one subordinate to another, with powers and functions clearly

demarcated."[182] On the legal and diplomatic front, the Republic of India was also a

formal success state to the *Raj*, taking over 627 treaties, conventions and agreements, as

well as the membership to 51 international organizations.[183]

Looking back to 1947, K. P. S. Menon, India's first Foreign Secretary and one of the

senior-most Indian bureaucrats who had served in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) since

1921, thus acknowledged that while independence was symbolically "nothing short of a

political revolution," in essence the state carried on its business as usual, as "the members

of the Legislative Assembly continued to let off steam; the judges upheld the majesty of

the law; and the ICS maintained law and order."[184] Similarly, on the diplomatic and

military fronts, the post-colonial institutions and personnel were widely, and in some cases

even exclusively coopted from the *Raj*.

For example, the Secret and Political Department was formed in 1783 by the East India

Company, renamed in 1843 as the Foreign Department, and then reorganised in, 1914,

as the Foreign and Political Department, with two separate secretaries for the princely

states on the subcontinent, and for relations with European and other powers. In 1935,

---

[182] Menon, *Integration*, 10. India's independence was gradual: for example, as per the Government of India Act, 1935, the members of the Constituent Assembly were indirectly elected in the Jan. 1946 provincial assembly elections, and almost one fourth of its members represented princely states: Granville Austin, *The Indian constitution: cornerstone of a nation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

[183] India was founding member of the League of Nations and held various diplomatic representations, legations abroad, starting with London, in 1919: Vineet Thakur, "The Colonial Origins of Indian Foreign Policymaking," *Economic & Political Weekly* 49, no. 32 (2014): 59.

[184] He served as the first Indian in the Foreign & Political Department. After joining the ICS in 1921, he served in Peshawar, Ceylon, Zanzibar, Baluchistan, and as Agent-General in China (1943-47): Kumara P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds Revisited: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1981), 262.

the external affairs and political departments split, and an integrated Indian Political Service created to serve both.[185] The British reluctance, after 1935, to include Indians in the foreign policy-making apparatus delayed this process in comparison to other bureaucratic areas.[186] But at the time of independence dozens of senior Indian officials had served the *Raj* across South Asia and also other regions, from Africa to Malaya, and imbibed its strategic culture.[187]

While possibly less exposed to the experience of dealing with grand global and strategic challenges, this elite cadre assimilated the *Raj*'s regional policies, experienced in dealing with a variety of security challenges across South Asia. Not surprisingly, several Indian ambassadors who served in Nepal, Ceylon and Burma in the 1950s had a long experience in working for the *Raj* across the subcontinent.[188] Similarly, most of India's Foreign Secretaries in the 1950s and 1960s had served in areas of the *Raj* that became independent states after the late 1940s.[189]

---

[185] For a view on how "the structures of administering the colonial government's external relations were continued by [independent India] as a matter of deliberate choice," see Pallavi Raghavan, "Establishing the Ministry of External Affairs," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 81. And K. Shankar Bajpai, "The Evolution of the Indian Foreign Service Establishment," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 1, no. 3 (2011).

[186] On the Indian participation in the bureaucratic cadres, see W. Murray Hogben, "An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianization of the Indian Political Service," *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 4 (1981).

[187] Foreign policy was kept at the discretion of the Governor General, as a "prerogative of the Crown" A. Appadorai, *The domestic roots of India's foreign policy, 1947-1972* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 49. For a perspective from the first Indian IPS officer to join the Foreign and Political Department, in 1935, as one of its two Deputy secretaries, see Menon, *Many Worlds Revisited: An Autobiography*, 135. By 1939, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) had 759 Europeans, and 640 Indians. In comparison, the Indian Political Service (IPS) only had less than twenty Indians. When created on Oct. 9, 1946, the new Indian Foreign Service (IFS) had 19 out of its 20 officers drawn from the ICS. In, 1946 when Nehru took over the Department of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations of the interim government, only two Indian IPS officers were serving in it. He appointed G. S. Bajpai as Secretary-General: Mehta, *Rescuing*, 83-5.

[188] In Nepal: Amb. Bhagwan Sahay (1955-1960), who joined the ICS in 1929. In Ceylon: High Commissioner B. N. Chakravarty (1955-56), joined the ICS in 1928. In Burma: K. K. Chettur (1952-55), joined the Indian Audit Department in 1925, and had also served in Rangoon in the 1930s.

[189] K. P. S. Menon served in Ceylon, as Agent General, in the late 1930s. Subimal Dutt (ICS 1928) had served as Indian Agent in Malaya (1941). Y. D. Gundevia joined the ICS in 1930, served in Burma before 1947 (and also as High Commissioner in Ceylon, 1957-60).

With the separation of Burma (1937), the partition of Pakistan (1947), and the Chinese annexation of Tibet (1950), independent India's bureaucracy and political leadership faced a significantly changed geopolitical context, different from the one they had grown accustomed to while serving (or contesting) the *Raj*. This was compounded by a severely curtailed state capacity, the traumas of a violent partition, and an adverse geostrategic context with the rise of Communist China, Soviet Russia and the emerging Cold War rivalries with the United States. Map 2 illustrates independent India's new geopolitical environment in South Asia.

Despite this, the *Raj*'s security horizons and strategic culture continued to manifest themselves, as reflected in one of J. Nehru's first proclamations as part of India's interim government, formed in 1946: "We are of Asia and the peoples of Asia are nearer and closer to us than others (…) India is so situated that she is the pivot of Western, Southern and South-East Asia."[190] While subsequent choices and circumstances drove India towards geostrategic introversion, the colonial legacy remained intact on the subcontinent. T. N. Kaul, one of Nehru's closest advisers in the 1950s, thus recalls that India remained "vitally concerned with Afghanistan, Burma, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives … [because] their stability, peace and security are vital to India's own and *vice versa*."[191]

---

[190] Quoted in Bimal Prasad, *The origins of Indian foreign policy: the Indian National Congress and world affairs, 1885-1947* (Calcutta: Bookland, 1962), 334.

[191] Triloki N. Kaul, *Reminiscences, discreet and indiscreet* (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1982), 175-6.

Map 2: India after the 1947 partition[192]

Beyond the legacy of security, there are also indications that independent India's foreign policy inherited and developed the *liberal* culture of the Raj. In one of the most perceptive studies of such influences, A. P. S. Rana noted that the ideas of non-alignment and internationalism were "typical and representative of the [Indian] leadership and the bulk of the educated elite that had evolved in several stages since the early days of the East

---

[192] http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00maplinks/modern/maps1947/maps1947.html

Indian Company … [and which] continue to constitute the framework within which adaptations are worked out in the contemporary [post-1947] politics of the country."[193]

Scholars have shown how this liberal legacy influenced India's foreign policies of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism or anti-racialism at the global level, for example at the United Nations and on *Apartheid* South Africa.[194] Very little attention, however, has been dedicated to examine this liberal legacy's influence on relations with the neighbors: for example, did Indian officials equate liberal democracy with political stability and security, and if so, did they prescribe and promote it in the region?

Finally, there are also strong indications that independent India's relations with its neighbors were deeply influenced by the *Raj*'s culture of subcontinental interventionism, as defined in Charles Metcalfe's seminal speech of 1843, examined in the previous section. As Secretary of the State Department after 1947, where he worked with V. S. Patel to persuade and coerce 554 different native or princely states to join the Indian Union, V. P. Menon thus recalled that his "most important consideration was the overall security of the [new] country" and that, therefore, the Government of India had the "right of entry into any State where internal stability was threatened."[195]

While promoting the principle of non-interference, in practice Nehru also violated it when deemed necessary, for example by coercing Nepal's Rana autocracy into a democratic regime change, in 1950-51. Speaking to Ceylon's Prime Minister S.

---

[193] A. P. Rana, *The imperatives of nonalignment: a conceptual study of India's foreign policy strategy in the Nehru period* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1976), 196-7.

[194] See, for example, Manu B. Bhagavan, *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012); Davis and Thakur, "Walking the Thin Line: India's Anti-Racist Diplomatic Practice in South Africa, Canada, and Australia, 1946–55; Itty Abraham, "From Bandung to NAM: Non-alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 46, no. 2 (2008).

[195] Menon, *Integration*, 68.

Bandaranaike, in 1960, he therefore suggested that while always necessary in principle, non-interference was not always practicable, given that India could not afford to simply ignore the "problems" of the world, and that of its neighbors, in particular:

> *We are planning [to develop our own country] and we have no desire to get entangled in other countries' problems. We have enough of our own and yet we cannot escape them. They [other countries' problems] surround us and try to overwhelm us because the world becomes so restricted, in spite of these controversies, grows so much as one world that whether we have the virtues of one world or not, we have to suffer the disadvantages of it all the time because all the ills of other countries also pursue us apart from our own. So we face these world problems because we cannot escape them.[196]*

As this dissertation goes on to explore, such logic permeated Indian strategic thought on Nepal, Ceylon/Sri Lanka and other small neighbors as their country's new "buffer states."[197] However, while in practice and in private Indian leaders and officials denoted a continued comfort with their hegemonic inheritance from the *Raj* in South Asia, such thought and practice often clashed with their exceptionalist and revisionist speeches in public.[198]

---

[196] Dec.1960, before parliament: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1960," (New Delhi 1961), 363.

[197] A former Indian MEA official defines this approach cogently: "India while pursuing a policy of accommodating her smaller neighbours, could hardly afford to give up the basic postulates of the policy pursued by the British in the past. There could be no running away from the fact that small states in the region fell in India's security perimeter and therefore must not follow policies that would impinge on her security concerns in the area." Avtar S. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka relations and Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict: documents, 1947-2000 v.1* (New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001), xxi.

[198] A former Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka reflects the consequent comfort with India's inevitable hegemonic status: "Ceylon lives in the shadow of the Indian colossus separated only by the Palk Straits and it would seem as hard to convince the Singhalese hat India presents no potential threat to them as it would be to persuade South American governments that they should have no anxiety whatsoever about American intentions". V. H. Coelho, *Across the Palk Straits: India-Sri Lanka relations* (Dehra Dun: Palit & Palit, 1976), 154.

While Indian foreign and security policies in the region reflected continued practice, the post-colonial Indian leadership adopted an exceptionalist *discourse* of righteousness and idealism, imbuing their polity with the moral mission to revolutionize world politics. As C. R. Mohan notes on defence and strategic issues, India's "post-colonial political class deliberately induced a collective national amnesia about the country's rich pre-independence military traditions."[199] Mohan observes that this is particularly striking in the neighborhood:

> *…acknowledging that India might have had a foreign policy before Independence is quite painful for our political classes. It is even more difficult for them to accept that the founder of independent India's foreign policy [J. Nehru] preserved many elements of the Raj legacy, especially in dealing with our neighbours. The first three treaties Jawaharlal Nehru signed after independence during 1949-50 were slightly modified versions of the 19th-century agreements that Calcutta negotiated with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal.[200]*

Having shaped their identity under the mass anti-colonial freedom struggle against British imperialism, it would be unrealistic to expect Indian political leaders to acknowledge this continuity. Instead, they became the principal driver of a moral and revolutionary *discourse* on foreign and strategic affairs that characterized power, military capabilities, and war as a Western obsession and anathema to the righteous mission of new India.

In this popular narrative, India and the rest of the colonized world had served as unwilling peons to Europe's petty imperial conflicts. Anarchy and conflict in the international system, and the associated theses of realpolitik, power politics, balancing,

---

[199] C. Raja Mohan, "The Return of the Raj," *American Interest* 5, no. 5 (2010): 5. One of the most popular handbooks used in Indian departments thus hardly makes any reference to pre-1947 traditions: J. Bandyopadhyaya, *The making of India's foreign policy: determinants, institutions, processes, and personalities*, 3rd ed. (New Delhi: Allied, 2003 [1970]).

[200] C. Raja Mohan, "Heritage Clause," *The Indian Express*, Aug. 24, 2009: http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/heritage-clause/506011/0

territorial expansion or security dilemmas, were accordingly a Western and imperial creation, which the post-colonial nations could mitigate and possibly also overcome. Conversely, India was also not keen to recognize its liberal democratic quality as a colonial inheritance. Any governmental attempt to "promote democracy" and associated liberal values in the neighboring countries thus often reflexively invited accusations of ideological imperialism and vested security interests.[201]

The historiographical and disciplinary IR debate on the extent to which this worldview and Nehruvian rhetoric, in particular, determined or influenced India's foreign and security policies will continue. However, as illustrated tentatively above, and across this dissertation, India's neighborhood policy demonstrates that there was a significant gap between both – Indian officials thus often spoke and acted in glaring contradiction. Such a stark contrast between practice and rhetoric is also perfectly embodied in the Mahatma Gandhi, who developed the exceptionalist Indian discourse of pacifism despite being a shrewd practitioner of political realism.[202]

By neglecting the past and being oblivious to the living legacy of the *Raj*'s strategic practice after 1947, Indian scholars often unwillingly assisted in the propagation of such discursive myths, further contributing to the gap between speech and practice.[203] Independent India's foreign policy would thus be defined as either a visionary and blank-slate creation of J. Nehru, or as the idealist continuation of the Indian National Congress'

---

[201] Chapter 5 discusses in detail how India's survival and success gradually lead to a greater comfort, and identification with liberal democracy.

[202] See, for example, Karuna Mantena, "Another Realism: The Politics of Gandhian Nonviolence," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012).

[203] As noted by C. R. Mohan, "the proposition that all that preceded 1947 was 'colonial' and therefore negative and irrelevant has cut us off from the rich diplomatic experience before independence." C. Raja Mohan, "Heritage Clause," *The Indian Express*, Aug. 24, 2009: http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/heritage-clause/506011/0

principled resolutions during the freedom struggle.[204] Nehru's focus on the principle of "non-interference," for example, which set the basis to the tripartite *Panchsheel* agreement with China and Burma, in 1954, has accordingly been described as reflecting his idealist naiveté and India's negative experience with British colonialism.

Such views ignore that, besides playing a strategic function to reduce the Sino-Indian security dilemma in overlapping spheres of influence such as Nepal, non-interference also served an important domestic role to shield the government from persistent demands of Indian public opinion to intervene in neighboring countries. Addressing the Indian Parliament, in 1960, Nehru thus warned parliamentarians that their idealist zeal, whether in support of Nepal's democrats, Ceylon's Tamils or India's diaspora in Burma, was welcome in principle, but often impracticable or even counter-productive:

> *…it should be remembered that this great Parliament, which is sovereign in India, and whose writ runs to every corner of India, cannot send its writs beyond the corner of India and cannot send its writs where they cannot be accepted and will not be accepted. … Sometimes Hon[orable] Members speak here as if we have merely to pass a resolution here or deliver a speech there and the history of the world will change and the great forces at work in the world will somehow climb down because a speech has been made or a resolution passed. Let us be idealists: I hope we shall never cease to be idealists. But let us also be realists and let us realise what is the world.[205]*

---

[204] For an argument that the Indian National Congress principles and resolutions "became the foundations of India's [post-1947] foreign policy" and that this was "likely to lead to a tendency to conceive of India's role in the world in terms of a preacher of moral principles and to rely more on the declaration of such principles than on the skillful practice of diplomacy and military preparedness for safeguarding vital national interests," see Prasad, *The origins of Indian foreign policy: the Indian National Congress and world affairs, 1885-1947*, 1, 267-7. Rahul Sagar thus argues that, while "historically at least, India's elite [before 1947] did in fact think about strategic matters" their views were mostly "idealist." Rahul Sagar, "Before Midnight: Views on International Relations, 1857-1947," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 65. For similar views, see Mahajan, "Establishing the MEA; Appadorai, *The domestic roots of India's foreign policy, 1947-1972*, 27-37.

[205] March 16, 1960, before parliament: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1960," 82.

c) The exceptionalist trap: effects on scholarship and policy articulation

Over the decades, the initial gap between India's strategic practice and its exceptionalist discourse widened into a gulf, reflected in an extraordinary small and shallow scholarly literature on its neighborhood policy. Given lacking or lagging declassification, and other reasons discussed in the previous sections, almost seventy years after independence there is not a single published book on India's foreign policy towards Nepal, Sri Lanka or Myanmar, that makes systematic use of declassified government sources. Former NSA S. S. Menon thus lamented, in 2013, that:

> *there is very little of that quality which is empirically based on the historical record and which suggests the real policy dilemmas that we face … We are yet to find a paradigm to satisfactorily explain the paradox of India having more in common than most countries with her neighbours in terms of language, culture, economic complementarity, common history, and so on, but still having difficult or complex relations with each of them. Instead our studies concentrate on the day to day politics and compulsions that affect these relationships rather than their drivers or explanations of why they are as they are.[206]*

By relying mostly on theoretical conjectures, ideological views, or ossified narratives – and mixing a variety of secondary sources and sparse interviews – scholars have thus helped perpetuating various myths about India's neighborhood policy, including the evolutionary account from Nehruvian idealism to greater realism after the 1970s.[207] Two of these narratives have been particularly pernicious.

---

[206] Dec. 11, 2013: http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22632/.

[207] For example: "India's regional policy under Nehru … was ill-conceived and ill-defined [and] purely reactive" Kapur, *India's foreign policy*, 93.

The idea of a Janus-faced India, hyperrealist in its own neighborhood but relatively "soft" and idealist beyond it, is one of the strongest entrenched narratives in Indian foreign policy scholarship.[208] Foreign scholars and practitioners, in particular, thus often gleefully refer to New Delhi's regional interventionism as alleged proof that India *can* shed its idealism to behave like a "normal power."

The problem, however, is that there is little or hardly any research on the specific mechanics of this regional realism, which is therefore dismissed as a reflexive impulse to control the neighborhood, and thus allegedly indicating a lack of strategic thought or culture.[209] One of the most quoted sources on India's regional security competition with China in South Asia, the American scholar John Garver, thus classified India as a "regional hegemonist," which "presumes to block the natural and rightful expansion of China's relations with its neighbours."[210] Critical narratives from the neighboring small states, which naturally accuse the Indian government of overreacting and bullying in times of crisis, have further contributed to the understanding that India's involvement is driven by an obsessive quest to control the region.[211]

Scholars thus widely quote a myriad of secondary sources to infer, for example, that "although it was never enunciated explicitly or officially, successive Indian governments

---

[208] For example, the view that Nehru's "idealism became hard realism when it came to dealing with the neighbours," Ashok K. Behuria et al., "Does India Have a Neighbourhood Policy?," *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 2 (2012): 234.

[209] This informs typical descriptions of India's neighbourhood policy as "too often reactive and at times quite dismissive" Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?*, 102.

[210] John W. Garver, *Protracted contest: Sino-Indian rivalry in the twentieth century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 31.

[211] For a Sri Lankan and Nepalese, respectively, see K. M. De Silva, *Regional powers and small state security: India and Sri Lanka, 1977-1990* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1996); Surya P. Subedi, *Dynamics of foreign policy and law: a study of Indo-Nepal relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

have systematically pursued an active policy of denial in South Asia similar to that applied to the Western Hemisphere by the United States in the nineteenth century."[212] The most frequent comparison is between an alleged "Indira doctrine" and the American "Monroe doctrine" of the 19th century. No effort, however, is dedicated to explaining the strategic thought, causes and reasoning that drives this quest to limit extra-regional influence in South Asia.

Instead, such realism is generally dismissed as an archaic expression of the India's former hegemonic status under the colonial *Raj*, and as an indication that Indian officials are incapable to adjust to the new geopolitical context.[213] M. Ayoob thus notes that India's "quest for predominance" in South Asia derives "from the Indian elite's perception that it inherited the Raj's strategic and political legacy."[214] Similarly, political scientist Subrata Mitra concludes that as a "quintessential successor state, India is keen to retain the status quo which its leaders understand in terms of its relative power and territorial boundaries that it was privy to prior to the end of colonialism."[215]

While the argument for continuity from the *Raj* is strong and intuitive, as developed in the preceding sections of this chapter, it should not be instrumentalized as a basket-case explanation for every Indian behavior in the region, nor as proof of absence of strategic thought. This dissertation will seek to expose the causal reasoning that drives India's

---

[212] Devin T. Hagerty, "India's regional security doctrine," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (1991): 363. For example, on an alleged "Indira Doctrine," such work often cites a foreign policy analyst in the aftermath of the 1983 Sri Lanka riots: Bhabani Sen Gupta, "The Indian Doctrine," *India Today*, Aug. 31, 1983, pp. 20-21.

[213] Two former American foreign service officers thus observe that "it is no wonder that generations of diplomats of other South Asian countries have complained in private to outsiders that their Indian counterparts act as if they were the inheritors of the British *raj*." Teresita C. Schaffer and Howard B. Schaffer, "Better Neighbors?: India and South Asian Regional Politics," *SAIS Review* 18, no. 1 (1998): 113.

[214] M. Ayoob, "India in South Asia: The quest for regional predominance," *World Policy Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 109.

[215] Subrata K. Mitra, "The reluctant hegemon: India's self-perception and the South Asian strategic environment," *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 3 (2003): 400.

neighborhood policy and, in particular, its attempts to limit the involvement of extra-regional powers.

Benign India: revisionist and righteous

The second and converse myth about India's neighborhood strategy portrays it as benevolent and righteous, in line with its overall exceptionalist narratives. Whenever proof emerges of Indian involvement, for example in Nepal, such practice is readily denied as unconceivable, or dismissed as an anomaly driven by a stray "deep state" agenda of an individual, an intelligence agency, or its conservative establishment. This reflects the discomfort of the public sphere, and accordingly sometimes also of India's own officials, to admit that the government has occasionally, when deemed necessary, employed coercion and force against its neighbors, and that these tools can be as as legitimate and effective as diplomacy in the instrumental repertoire of a regional power.

Reflecting such discomfort while looking back, diplomat Jagat Mehta thus classified "India's relations with its neighbours [as] its greatest failure," because "we should have stuck to our principles of non-interventionism."[216] Similarly, in 1985, just two years before sending the Army into Sri Lanka, and three years before imposing a trade blockade on landlocked Nepal, PM Rajiv Gandhi declared India's principled commitment to non-interference and further stimulated such exceptionalist narratives:

---

[216] Mehta sustains his criticism with reference to his success in negotiating a variety of bilateral agreements on hydropower with Nepal, in the 1970s, noting that "humiliated nations do not make pliable partners in progress," Jagat S. Mehta, *The tryst betrayed: reflections on diplomacy and development* (New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2010), 315, 19, 248.

India wants to live in a peaceful neighbourhood. We cannot develop and progress if there is tension around us. We believe in total equality, brotherhood, mutual cooperation. We do not want an Indian hegemony on the countries around us. Even the smallest countries - Bhutan, and Maldives - must have their own independent personalities, character, government, their own independent methods of development and progress.[217]

The pervasive influence of such righteous narratives on India's strategic discourse, and perhaps also practice, is aptly diagnosed by scholar S. D. Muni's observation that in "dealing with big-small [state] relationships we, most of the time, seem to be conditioned by a moral, ethical assumption that the big is bad and the small is innocent."[218] K. Subrahmanyam, thus beckoned Indians to abandon romantic ideas about their country's alleged sovereign equality with its neighbors, and scholars, in particular, to face the fundamental reality of power differentials and clashing security interests:

There is nothing abnormal or unusual in this [hegemonic] situation and there is no justification for the sense of guilt some in India exhibit about our relationship with our neighbours. No big country … is loved by its neighbours though it may be feared, very often disliked and sometimes even respected. … [Tensions are normal because of a] fundamental factor of basic conflict of security interests between India and her neighbours. Nothing is to be gained by glossing over this and talking of community of interests and identity of views.[219]

Not surprisingly, only very few scholars have thus been able to break through exceptionalist narratives in public discourse and forward a candid, pragmatic and realist analysis of democratic India's regional strategy, especially with reference to Nepal and Sri Lanka.[220] Transcending the "bully" and "benign" India narratives, which she respectively qualifies as "hegemonic" and "defensive," scholar Maya Chadda, for example, has shown

---

[217] MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1985," (New Delhi 1986), 299.

[218] S. D. Muni, *India and Nepal: a changing relationship* (New Delhi: Konark 1992), 1.

[219] Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 245-6.

[220] The best example is that of S. D. Muni, Professor Emeritus at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, in New Delhi, who has authored deeply analytical and pragmatic books on India's relations with Nepal and Sri Lanka, and on the neighbourhood, in general. See, for example, S. D. Muni, *India's foreign policy: the democracy dimension (with special reference to its neighbours)* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2009). For a more recent pragmatic take, from a new generation of analysts, see Nitin Pai, *The Paradox of Proximity: India's Approach to Fragility in the Neighbourhood* (New York: NYU Center on International Cooperation, 2011).

how the Indian state's regional strategy is driven by a policy of "relational control" over its neighbors, whose internal stability is seen as critical to Indian domestic security and nation-building strategy.[221]

d) Realigning strategic thought, speech and practice in the region

In 1998, J. N. Dixit, one of India's most experienced diplomats in the region and its first National Security Adviser, recalled that throughout his career he and his colleagues had often faced the "difficult task of reconciling the moral vision on the basis we wish the international order to be structured with the non-moral requirements of 'realpolitik' to which we have had to adjust, time and again."[222]

More than just difficult, such a task of reconciling morality with reality has proven to be sisyphean, and maybe also chimerical because it is based on a false binary between values and interests. Instead, Dixit's candid admission that Indian foreign policy persistently conformed to the "non-moral requirements of realpolitik" represents a rare realist voice in the idealist wilderness of India's *discourse* about power politics.

India's relations with its neighbors are a particularly promising issue area to evaluate the divergence between practice and discourse, as this dissertation proposes to, since it is where the country's core security interest – territorial integrity – is often affected by neighboring instability. Domestic security often requires a range of coercive instruments to be applied beyond borders, which will necessarily violate the principle of non-interference. Eric Gonsalves, one of India's senior-most retired diplomats, who began his

---

[221] Chadda, *Ethnicity, Security*.

[222] J. N. Dixit, *Across borders: Fifty years of India's foreign policy*: Picus Books New Delhi, 1998), ix.

career in 1949, thus notes that "we have to redefine our attitude towards intervention in our neighbourhood [and] should not rule it out," because "if one aspires to be even a regional power, one must consider all possible scenarios and make contingency plans."[223]

However rare and however different from that the United States, European or other great powers, Indian regional involvement and interventionism has a history of its own, which will require a deeper and less dispassionate study for improved performance in the future. The following empirical chapters on Indian relations with Nepal, Ceylon/Sri Lanka and Burma/Myanmar seek to contribute to this objective.

---

[223] Kishan S. Rana, "Oral History Record of Ambassador Eric Gonsalves," (New Delhi: Indian Council for World Affairs, 2012), 114. See also Khilnani, "India's Rise," 694.

PART I – STRATEGIC ASSESSMENTS DETERMINING CRISIS RESPONSE

> *- Charlie Rose (PBS): "India being the largest functioning democracy, how it is that it can have as its close neighbor [Myanmar] a system which is totally different from democracy?"*
>
> *- Pranabh Mukherjee (India's Minister of External Affairs): "But what can I do? India [as] a democracy, parliamentary democracy, flourished, despite poverty, despite backwardness, despite illiteracy, despite slow growth rate[s]. [But] we cannot change our neighbors. We have to live with them. It's better to live in peace. I cannot alter the [system of] government in my neighborhood."[224]*

How has India "lived with" its non-democratic neighbors? The Indian minister's response to journalist Charlie Rose, just as the military rulers in Myanmar cracked down on pro-democracy protestors in 2007, suggests both pragmatism and passivity, as if India was condemned to perpetually coexist with all neighboring states, whether military, monarchic or ethno-nationalist autocracies. In practice, however, India has adopted different postures towards neighboring governments, from engagement to coercion, and at times even undermined them or supported regime change.

Beyond the principled myth of "non-interference" as one of India's alleged foreign policy axiom, this historical record indicates a far more activist role than the helplessness implied by minister P. Mukherjee before American cameras. The first part of this dissertation therefore seeks to understand what factors drive New Delhi's neighborhood activism: it does so by examining what strategic assessments drove India's posture during regime crises in three neighboring states – Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar – across three time periods, from the 1950s to the 2000s.

---

[224] Oct. 2: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2007* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2008), 329.

The introduction of this dissertation reviewed around three dozen regime crises in South Asia and found a puzzling variation in India's posture, both in terms of degree of involvement (from inaction to intervention), and also in terms of direction of involvement (from engaging authoritarian regimes to coercing democratic governments). Clearly, regime type never *determined* India's posture: in the early 1960s, J. Nehru invoked non-interference to engage an absolutist monarchy in Nepal and a military regime in Burma, while in the 1980s PM R. Gandhi used coercion and military force to intervene in formally democratic Sri Lanka.

However, conventional explanations, as reviewed in the preceding Chapter 1, insist in attributing India's foreign policy to grand motives such as "idealism" or "realism." In the neighborhood, in particular, India's crises postures and involvement are simplistically described as a reflexive pursuit of security interests as a regional power, popularly also known as "hegemonic bullying". Such explanations attribute Indian behavior either to a deeply rooted imperial culture, or to a compulsive obsession to destabilize its neighbors.

The nine case studies in this part (chapters 2, 3 and 4) serve to unpack these grand claims. Beyond "values," "interests" or "security," what specific assessments drive India's posture during each crisis? A variety of possible factors emerge: 1) the neighboring regime's relative strength, attitude towards India, and eventual alternatives; 2) the relative intensity of each crisis, and possible impact of disorder and instability on India's domestic security; 3) New Delhi's varying leverage and capacity to influence the crisis outcome; 4) the regional security environment and presence of extra-regional or rival powers; 5) the experience and outcome of preceding Indian involvement; 6) the degree of consensus among different organizations within the government; 7) the influence of Indian domestic

politics and pressure groups on decision-making; or 8) the effect of other countries' postures, international pressure and norms.

Each case study reconstructs the Indian decision-making process, examining the relative influence of these and other factors. While describing such assessments, it is important to underline that I am not interested in *justifying* India's posture, or in *legitimizing* its success in hindsight. Instead, the objective is to identify basic lines of strategic thought that drive Indian practice. By tracing these assessments across three time periods, from the 1950s to the 2000s, Part 1 seeks to identify both patterns of continuity and change in India's strategic culture of crisis response and involvement.

CHAPTER 2 – PRAGMATIC ENGAGEMENT DESPITE LIBERAL SETBACKS (1956-1962)

> *We may talk about international goodwill and mean what we say. We may talk about peace and freedom and earnestly mean what we say. But in the ultimate analysis, a government functions for the good of the country it governs and no government dares do anything, which in the short or long run is manifestly to the disadvantage of that country.*[225]
>
> J. Nehru to India's Constituent Assembly (1947)

This chapter deals with the first three crises in Nepal, Ceylon and Burma, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, under Prime Minister J. Nehru. In each case, neighboring regime underwent a liberal reversal: in Nepal, the royal coup of 1960 ended parliamentary democracy and returned the kingdom to autocratic royal rule; in Ceylon, the elections of 1956 steered the regime towards Sinhala ethno-nationalism, sowing the seeds for conflict and future war; and in Burma, the military coup of 1962 ended 14 years of multi-party democracy and put the fate of Rangoon in the hands of a few generals.

In all three cases, Nehru's India had been a firm advocate and supporter of political liberalization. In Nepal, it interfered in 1950-51 to end autocratic rule and thereafter committed vast resources to support democratization. In Ceylon, while engaging in complex bilateral negotiations on the fate of a million stateless people of Indian origin, it underlined that the country's future stability depended on an inclusive constitutional model that recognized the demands of the Tamil minority. In Burma, it had provided military assistance for the newly independent, federal and democratic government to fend

---

[225] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Independence and after: a collection of speeches* (New York: John Day, 1950), 204-5.

off a Communist rebellion, in 1948, and then supported the democratic regime of Prime Minister U Nu.

Despite such extraordinary support and strong commitment favoring political liberalization among its neighbors, Prime Minister J. Nehru pursued a policy of pragmatic engagement of these illiberal regimes. What assessments lead to this cooperative posture? Why did India compromise on its alleged "idealism"? Why did it refrain from using its leverage to adopt a coercive posture, seeking to save the democratic experiments in Nepal and Burma, or mitigate the illiberal tilt in Ceylon?

1. Nepal 1960

> *We must not let the Nepalese rulers take us for granted, in their attempt to appease other powers. A friendly, but firm approach is necessary, so that our national and security interests do not suffer.*[226]
>
> T. N. Kaul, former Indian diplomat

The royal coup of December 1960 ended Nepal's first democratic experiment, which had begun in 1951 and culminated in 1959 with a new constitution, parliamentary elections and a government formed by the Nepali Congress. India had been deeply involved in the country's political liberalization throughout the decade, so Nehru lamented this reversal in public. But despite domestic pressure and capacity to do so, he refrained from formally condemning or attempting to dislodge the new absolutist regime. Instead, and despite tensions, India pursued an overall policy of engagement, based on two prior assessments: 1) the degenerating security environment along the Himalayas, with an increasingly

---

[226] Kaul, *Reminiscences*, 178.

assertive China making hostile inroads into Nepal; and 2) the rising costs of a weakening and divided democratic regime in Kathmandu, under increasing pressure from the King.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

On the cold Kathmandu morning of December 15, 1960, a contingent of the Royal Nepal Army arrested the kingdom's first democratically elected Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala, just as the head of state, King Mahendra, made a radio proclamation to explain that he had been forced to take over power in order to guide the country to "true democracy." By dissolving the parliament, he promised to save national interests from being overridden by what he identified as "corrupt personal and party interests" which, he alleged, had "disrupted administration," proven unable to "preserve law and order," and pursued "mismatched economic theories".[227] He re-instituted direct royal rule and thus put an end to nine years of democratic reforms.

How did India react to this sudden regime change? Two opposing theories persist until today, none of which entirely accurate: one posits that a cynic Nehru was given prior notification and consented to the coup, ditching the democrats to support the King's absolutist rule.[228] The other one speculates that an idealist Nehru was caught by surprise and thereafter worked to undermine the King's regime by assisting the Nepali Congress' armed struggle to reinstitute democracy.[229]

---

[227] Proclamations of December 15 and 26: Bir B. S. D. Mahendra, *Pages of history: A collection of proclamations, messages and addresses, Series 1* (Kathmandu: Ministry of National Guidance, 1963), 1-7.

[228] Based on conversations with M. P. Koirala and Rishikesh Shaha, Nepalese scholar G. R. Sharma suggests that "Nehru not only had prior knowledge but had also consented to the change [1960 coup]." in Matrika P. Koirala, *A role in a revolution* (Lalitpur: Jagadamba Prakashan/Himal, 2008), xii.

[229] This was a frequent accusation of the Nepalese government, and also of the opposition in Indian parliament. According to the Nepalese home minister, the NC's armed rebellion after 1961 lead to around 300 incidents and almost 300 casualties [NAI HI/1012(27)/63 p.2]. Foreign Secretary S. Dutt recalls that despite "one or two persons holding high official positions" suggesting such support, Nehru was "strongly

The truth lies somewhere in the middle. Nehru was certainly not surprised by the coup, India having been well aware of Mahendra's deep discontent with democracy, at least since 1958.[230] But Nehru may not have expected, nor preferred, such an absolute take-over, which placed many of his old friends under humiliating detention. India's Foreign Secretary at the time, S. Dutt, thus notes that the Prime Minister was "angry beyond measure" and saw Nepal's "complete reversal of democracy" as one of his "greatest disappointments."[231]

Nehru had good reasons to be disappointed: India had been deeply involved in Nepal's liberal experiment since 1951, when it coerced the ruling Rana aristocracy out of power and mediated an agreement between the King and the democrats.[232] This was followed by a massive effort to modernize of one of the world's most isolated countries, previously closed to all foreign contact.

From delivering aid and fostering trade and investment, to rendering expert support to help Nepal create a modern state bureaucracy, upgrade its military, design a new constitution, and hold free elections, India had taken the lead to initiate and support one of Asia's boldest experiments in political liberalization. By the late 1950s, the landlocked

---

opposed" and "issued instructions against Indian territory being used for subversive activities against Nepal." Subimal Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates 1977), 265. A 1962 inquiry concludes that "the cause of these incidents is internal" and that "our border authorities are taking all possible precautions to prevent the transit of armed rebels" [Letter of 7/3/1962, NAI HI/1012(27)/63 p. 257-9]. However, for an indication that New Delhi may have used the rebels as leverage see Shriman Narayan, *India and Nepal: an exercise in open diplomacy* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1970), 94-5.

[230] Speaking to parliament on Dec. 16, 1960, Nehru says he was aware of the King's discontent but that he had had "no intimation." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 409. PM B. P. Koirala recalls King Mahendra was planning a coup since before the 1959 election. D. P. Tripathi, ed. *Nepal in transition: a way forward* (New Delhi: Vij 2011), 58. In a speech on Jan. 28, 1960, the King had exhorted Nepalis to work together, "so that I may not be compelled to take some other measures." Quoted by Sam Cowan in "The Maharaja and the monarch," *Record Nepal*, April 21, 2015, at http://recordnepal.com/wire/maharaja-and-monarch-0

[231] Dutt, *With Nehru*, 261, 64.

[232] On India's role in the 1950-51 transition, see Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 103-75

kingdom's economy relied almost exclusively on India, whose assistance projects also lead to a new road connection Southwards and key hydroelectric projects. [233] Most importantly, India contributed massively to modernizing Nepal's feudal state administration, having trained close to one thousand Nepalese officials by 1960, and deputing dozens of its own high-ranking officials to Kathmandu.[234]

Such levels of assistance often led New Delhi to become entangled, ending up micromanaging its neighbor's politics and governance, in blatant violation of Nehru's promise, in 1950, that "we do not interfere internally in a foreign government" because "it is up to the Nepalese to run their affairs."[235] Despite such principled promises, Nepal quickly transformed into J. Nehru's greatest state-building project abroad, a major effort that, just after taking its first baby steps with the elections of 1959, suddenly collapsed under the weight of an absolutist royal hand.

Liberal India's grief and concern at such loss led to tensions with Kathmandu, which are examined in Part II of the dissertation. More remarkable, however, is that despite its preference and massive investment in the democratic regime ousted in December 1960, New Delhi adapted swiftly to the new circumstances, pursuing a policy of engagement towards King Mahendra.

---

[233] Between 1956 and 1963, Nepal's total external trade with India ranged between 93 and 99% and a new Treaty of Trade and Transit entered into force in 1960. S. D. Muni, Foreign policy of Nepal: National Publishing House, 1973), 221. In 1956, Nehru estimated Indian investments in Nepal to be six times higher than in Burma: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1956," (New Delhi 1957), 74. Key project included the Tribhuvan Road built by the Indian Army, and hydro-electric projects at Kosi, Trisuli and Gandak: Muni, *Foreign policy of Nepal*, 179-216. See also Eugene B. Mihaly, *Foreign aid and politics in Nepal: a case study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[234] By 1960, India had allotted 964 out of its total 1442 training slots under the Colombo Plan to Nepalese officials: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1961," (New Delhi 1962), 2. In 1960, of 230 foreign experts in Nepal, the largest contingent was from India (78, followed by 75 Americans) [NAI 6(27)-R&I/60 p. 48]. By the end of the 1950s, the Embassy in Kathmandu was the third largest Indian diplomatic mission abroad, after Washington and London.

[235] May 22: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 88.

Such Indian pragmatism was immediately apparent after the coup, throughout 1961, in three different ways.[236] First, while not refraining from expressing his "regret" at the democratic "setback," Nehru persistently fended off fierce domestic pressures and demands, including from his own party, to formally condemn or take punitive actions against the royal regime.[237] Second, he made a clear assessment that King Mahendra was firmly in the saddle and that therefore, rather than trying to resuscitate the democratic project of the 1950s, India should now concentrate energies to adapt to the reality of changed circumstances.[238] Third, Nehru insisted in keeping all political and diplomatic channels open with Kathmandu, continuing existing aid projects and thus preserve some degree of normalcy in the bilateral relationship.[239]

Why did Nehru pursue this engagement, shedding the load of ten years of investment in Nepal's liberalization, and despite domestic opposition and sufficient capacity to at least attempt to coerce King Mahendra into reinstating democracy? However conflicted, two developments forced India, in 1960, to ditch democracy and court the King: 1) a changed external security environment, with an increasingly hostile China to the North; and 2) a

---

[236] American scholar L. Rose argues that India's position "cannot properly be categorized as hard-line anti-royal regime": Rose, *Strategy for survival*, 234.

[237] Dec. 16, in parliament: "it is not for me to criticize the actions there." On Jan. 6, 1961 at annual session of his party (INC), he opposes a resolution by R. Jha (of Bihar) that condemned the coup and urged King Mahendra to reinstitute democracy: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 409, 13. On Feb. 23, Nehru again before parliament: "Hon. Members sometimes imagine that we should issue directives to other Governments, tell them what to do and what not to do. That is a kind of thing which obviously we neither want to do nor can do but which irritates the other [Nepalese] Government very much." MEA, "FAR 1961," 34.

[238] Dec. 20, in parliament: Unlike past "intervals," he notes, "this is a complete reversal of democracy … and it is not clear to me that there can be a going back to the democratic process in the foreseeable future." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 412.

[239] Jan. 8, 1961: Nehru directs his Foreign Secretary to continue existing aid projects in Nepal. April: new trade agreement signed. Besides signing seven further aid agreements, in 1961 India provided 16 advisers, 182 technical personnel, 23 professors, and 330 scholarships (of a total 360): MEA, "Annual Report 1961-62," (New Delhi 1962), 23-4. On Aug. 16, 1961, Nehru: "We have continued this help, and we have made no difference to it even though some changes took place in Nepal, as the House well knows, which were not very much to our liking." MEA, "FAR 1961," 223.

new internal balance of forces in Nepal, with an activist King undermining any credible democratic alternative that could deliver on India's external security concerns.

China, the rising threat from the North

> *… as much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot risk our own security by anything going wrong in Nepal which either permits that barrier [Himalayas] to be crossed or otherwise weakens our frontier.*[240]
>
> PM J. Nehru, 1950

Even while seeking to engage China diplomatically in the mid-1950s on Nepal, Nehru underlined that his support for democratization and modernization of the kingdom was, in the long term, a project to secure India from a Northern offensive.

Relations with China had taken a negative turn in the late 1950s, and Indian threat assessments increased dramatically the Sino-Indian border dispute flared up, in 1959. Furthermore, China had been pursuing an increasingly independent course on Nepal – ignoring Nehru's outreach that had invited it to work with, and not against India. With the possibility of a military escalation and war with China on the horizon, New Delhi was in no condition to alienate the King or engaging in a risky regime change operation – any of which would have only pushed the monarch further into Chinese hands or engulfed the Kingdom into a spiral of destabilization and conflict that would harm India the most.

Nehru's outreach to China on Nepal in the mid-1950s has often been construed as an appeasement policy that naively played into Chinese hands, neglecting security considerations. His focus on diplomacy was, however, premised on the rather pragmatic

---

[240] Dec. 6, 1950, quoted in Sam Cowan, "The Indian checkposts, Lipu Lekh, and Kalapani," Record Nepal, Dec. 14, 2015, at http://recordnepal.com/wire/indian-checkposts-lipu-lekh-and-kalapani

assessment that a) that the People's Republic of China (PRC) had historical and legitimate security interests in Nepal, which were expected to increase after the annexation of Tibet; b) given geographic and cultural linkages, Indian security stakes in Nepal were far superior to those of the PRC; and that therefore c) in an attempt to avoid conflict as the dominant power in Nepal, India needed to take the initiative to mediate and moderate Chinese interests in the kingdom. Thus, when, in 1954, the PRC first expressed interest in establishing diplomatic relations with Nepal, Nehru assumed a tutelary and mediating role in order to get implicit Chinese support for India's primacy over Nepal.[241] The establishment of Sino-Nepalese diplomatic relations, in 1955, was therefore executed not despite, but because of Indian interests.[242]

But even before this outreach policy began, around 1954, India's approach had always been anchored in the assessment that its security depended on Nepal.[243] Deposed Prime Minister B. P. Koirala, thus recalls Nehru warning him, in the early 1950s:

> *The Chinese have always been imperialistic. They consider themselves to be the centre of the world, and now that the Communist regime, which has an aggressive ideology, is aligned with the basic imperialistic instinct of China, [it] desires to create trouble. The Chinese basically think the others are barbarians and they alone are fit to rule, and on top of that there is the existing Communist ideology.[244]*

Beyond mere words, such a threat assessment also guided Indian policies to strengthen Nepal as a first defensive bulwark against Chinese incursion, especially by modernizing

---

[241] See e.g. Nehru's discussion on Nepal with Zhou Enlai, Oct. 20, 1954: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 358-61, 70

[242] Formal relations established on August 1, 1955. J. Nehru's support, confirmed in a letter to King Mahendra three months earlier, referred to certain conditions: China was to be represented in Nepal via a non-resident ambassador in India, and "whatever discussions take place between your Government and the Chinese Government, it will be desirable to have them in New Delhi." Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 27, Second Series* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2000), 20-31.

[243] See his June 21, 1952 letter to B. P. Koirala: "It is not my concern what kind of Government the Nepalese people would like to have themselves. But if something happens in Nepal which endangers our own security, then of course this is a matter of great consequence to us." Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 28, Second Series* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2001), 269.

[244] Quoted in Tripathi, *Nepal in transition*, 51.

the Nepalese Army, developing road infrastructure, and an extensive Indian military-intelligence network set up in 1952 along the Sino-Nepalese border.[245]

After 1957, as China began its direct inroads into Nepal without India's tutelary role, and actively courted both the King and the democratic parties, the India-China diplomatic channel gave way to a competitive security dynamic.[246] The Indian threat assessment kept increasing: Nehru's talks with Zhou Enlai failed, the dispute along the Sino-Indian border escalated, Beijing formally annexed Tibet in early 1959 and, in June of 1960, the PLA launched a military raid into Nepal's strategic Mustang valley, just after signing the Sino-Nepalese Boundary agreement. [247] Thereafter, the new China threat would dominate all Indian views on Nepal, including its response to the coup in 1960.[248]

The centrality of this Chinese threat assessment is confirmed by changing relations with the United States.[249] Nehru's initial skepticism about an American presence in Nepal was shaped by a deeply held strategic concern to insulate the Kingdom from the increasingly

---

[245] The 1951 report by Maj. Gen. Thorat, order by the Intelligence Bureau and Home Minister, concluded that the "defence of India was not possible without the defence of Nepal". Mullik, *My years*, 104-42. In 1951-52, this leads to the deployment of an Indian Military Mission to Nepal, including 18 check posts along the Sino-Nepalese border, each with 20-40 Indian military and intelligence personnel. In 1958, the mission is downsized and reconstituted as the Indian Military Training and Advisory Group, with 11 Indian officers led by a Maj.-Gen. NAI 6(27)-R&I/58 p. 2 of May report, see also Sam Cowan, "Indian checkposts" op. cit.

[246] For example, Nepalese PM B. P. Koirala recalls Mao's advice during his 1960 visit to Beijing: "[we] came to realize that going by the advice of others [Russia] provided more benefits to them than for us … You, too, should do what is good for you, rather than follow someone else's [India] instructions." B. P. Koirala, *Atmabrittanta: late life recollections*: Himal, 2001), 227.

[247] This prompted e.g. Sept. 1960 concern by Embassy counsellor P. R. S. Mani about "unpreparedness of the Nepalese authorities and their lagging efforts to assert their jurisdiction as well as to bring about development according to their patterns in the border areas." NAI, MEA 6(27)-R&I/60 p. 66. On the April, 1960 visit of Zhou Enlai and Marshal Chen Yi, Ambassador H. Dayal: "[it] marks the entry of the Chinese directly into Nepalese affairs. This development, which is inevitable with the deterioration in our relations with China, could have grave consequences for us as well as for Nepal." NAI 6(27)-R&I/60 p. 32, see also Ambassador B. Sahay's report for March (p. 4) and May (p. 6).

[248] The director of the Intelligence Bureau, recalls that "every attempt was made to convince Nepal that she need no longer depend on India for her development and defence … [but] China was making a deep dent in an area of undoubted [Indian] influence." Mullik, *My years*, 269-70.

[249] For a detailed discussion, see Madan, "Eye to the East," 217-9.

117

competitive and interventionist triangular Cold War rivalry between the United States, the USSR and the PRC.[250] These concerns were particularly targeted at Washington because it was the farthest removed from South Asia, and thus seen as having the highest trouble-making potential in Nepal, given the absence of any direct stakes.[251] But Nehru's policy was one of "equal denial" to any external involvement and this is underlined by his equivalent apprehension about the Soviet Union's presence in Nepal. [252]

However, while Indian apprehensions of an escalating conflict were seemingly confirmed by the CIA's outreach to the Tibetan resistance, culminating with a first airdrop of weapons in 1957, they were supplanted by more rising concerns about China. The United States would therefore be rewarded for their policy of deference to India while Nehru exhausted his diplomatic capital with Beijing.[253] More importantly, Washington understood the strategic concern behind India's policy of denial: a 1957, NSC briefing

---

[250] Nehru on American aid, in a letter to his ambassador on Feb. 26, 1949: "India cannot possibly permit the growth of strong vested interests in Nepal controlled by foreign authority." Similarly, in 1952, Nehru opposes an American Library in Kathmandu on the grounds that "it is rather naïve to think this can come without any conditions or strings being attached to it." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 65, 233-4.

[251] In 1954, Nehru to his ambassador: "[while] there is no present or near danger to Nepal from the so-called [Chinese and Nepalese] Communists, a far greater danger is from the Americans." A few months later: "American agents are particularly active creating anti-India propaganda." In October, to Zhou Enlai: "[In Nepal,] America is creating a lot of trouble." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 233-4, 329, 47.

[252] When Nepal unexpectedly announces full relations with the USSR, in 1956, India's Foreign Secretary opposes on the grounds that this "would give rise to widespread misunderstanding about Soviet intentions" and Nehru persuades Moscow to postpone the embassy opening. Nehru, *SWJN SS v27*, 30. Nepal's PM T. P. Acharya recalls: "the Indians were very angry with me. I didn't tell the Indian Ambassador I was going to do that." in James F. Fisher, *Living martyrs: individuals and revolution in Nepal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 173.

[253] In 1954, the U.S. Ambassador George Allen thus seeks to reassure Sir Narayana Pillay that "we had no desire to disrupt Indian-Nepalese relations and throw Nepal into hands of Communist China," in http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v11p2/d807. See also NSC brief: http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v11p2/d623.

thus notes that "the United States should regulate its activity in Nepal so as not to encourage the Chinese Communists to expand their operations there".[254]

As China accelerated its independent outreach to Nepal, American and Indian views thus started to converge, leading to a slow, but gradual alignment of interests and punctual cooperation, beginning with Nehru's 1956 visit to the United States.[255] This mutual respect went to such an extent that it even defeated shrewd Nepalese attempts to play off Washington against New Delhi, which had often succeeded in the past.[256]

After finally opening its new embassy in Kathmandu, in August 1959, with Indian concurrence, the United States hosted King Mahendra for an official visits in April 1960, and while the royal take-over later that year came as an unpleasant surprise, Washington shared India's preference for a pragmatic engagement of the new regime.[257]

---

[254] NSC 1957 brief notes that the United States "refrained from establishing a resident diplomatic mission in Nepal because such action would doubtless lead the Communist Chinese, and perhaps also the Soviet Union, to open a similar mission" https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d168. The Chinese seemed to share this view, as early as Oct. 1954: "to prevent the US from citing a precedent, he [Zhou Enlai] will consider Prime Minister Nehru's suggestion [of not opening an embassy], but if the US sends a dedicated ambassador, we will do the same." http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121742.

[255] See Dec. 1956 U.S. Embassy cable, briefing Washington for Nehru's visit: "India is aware of Chinese danger along her northern border and Chinese threat of subverting Nepal and Burma. We believe Nehru highly conscious and worried on these scores" in http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d160. On joint aid projects after 1956, and a tripartite Nepal-US-India agreements in 1959, see http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d3.

[256] E.g. Oct. 1958, on Nepal's Foreign Secretary request for aid: "Nepal itself could and should undertake 'clear' with GOI Nepalese approach to US for specific project assistance. Indeed Thapa had already done this personally with Nehru. Latter, after explaining GOI in no position help RNA, even encouraged Thapa turn to USG for help" https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v15/d274. See also November meeting with J. F. Dulles: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v15/d275.

[257] Immediate U.S. reaction: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v15/d290 A Jan. 1962 brief thus recommends that given new Chinese attempts to "detach Nepal from India's sphere of influence", the US would "continue to favor efforts to bring about an accommodation between the King and the Nepali Congress." https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v19/d88

Royal revival: Nepal's democracy turns into a liability

> *"From the beginning, Nepal has been a headache to us."*[258]
> J. Nehru to Zhou Enlai (1954)

A second reason for Nehru's policy of engagement related to the changes in Nepal's domestic political balance, with the weakening of India's traditional allies in the Nepali Congress party and the rise of a more interventionist monarch. The coup only formalized this shift and, in the absence of any credible alternative, India's assessment was that any attempt to take on the King would only push him further into Chinese hands or fuel domestic conflict with grave security implications for India.

The principal factor was the emergence, in 1955, of King Mahendra who, short of openly sabotaging Nepal's democratic reforms, quickly confirmed Indian apprehensions that he would be far less pliable and liberal than his father Tribhuvan.[259] Divergences soon surfaced, with Mahendra repeatedly blocking democratic reforms.[260] Even more detrimental to Indian interests was the King's active involvement in politics to increase his own power by using the nationalist pro-China and anti-India cards to play off different parties against each other. This did not surprise New Delhi, which was well aware of the long, and successful Nepalese strategic tradition to enhance its autonomy by balancing off its neighbors.[261] However, for the first time in its history, Kathmandu was being ruled by

---

[258] October 20, 1954: Nehru, *SWJN SS v27*, 29.

[259] See Nehru's announcement of Tribhuvan's death in parliament on March 14, 1955: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1955," (New Delhi 1956), 62. On the new king's personality as a "complete contrast" with his father's, based on "shrewdness," see Dutt, *With Nehru*, 263.

[260] In 1955, for example, Nehru disagreed with King Mahendra's suggestion of a limited franchise for parliamentary elections: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 375-76. The monarch also rejected proposals for a Constituent Assembly, and according to Amb. H. Dayal, was lobbying for a "draft which would strengthen the rights of monarchy a against the people and popular institutions." NAI, MEA 6(27)-R&I/58 p. 1.

[261] Diplomat J. Mehta, who dealt with Nepal at the time, recalls: "we should not have been surprised when we were flattered by imitation and Nepal got tempted to adopt a sub-continental variant of non-alignment

more than one man – and the competitive logic of democratic politics, instigated by the King's hidden hand, soon proved to be fatal for what India had hoped to be the ideal reward for its long investment in Nepal's democratization: a pliable, but strong and stable and democratic government, friendlier towards India than to China.

Nepalese leaders and diplomats had been well aware, and directly cautioned by New Delhi, since at least the mid-1950s, that Kathmandu was not to deal northwards without first consulting southwards.[262] But in an ironic twist, the strongest pro-China tilt was implemented by the Nepali Congress government, elected in the Spring of 1959, a party which New Delhi had nurtured and expected to be most favorable to its concerns. Thus, in order to assuage accusations of compromising Nepal's sovereignty by serving Indian interests, Prime Minister B. P. Koirala formalized Nepal's new non-alignment strategy as an "open door policy" to diversify diplomatic relations, and thus contributed to reduce India's leverage.[263] From full diplomatic relations with four states in 1955 – India, the United Kingdom, France and the United States – by the time King Mahendra took over in 1960, Nepal had established relations with 29 states, 18 of which alone under B. P. Koirala's 18-month long government.[264]

---

between two powerful contending neighbours" Mehta, *Rescuing*, 240. Amb. H. Dayal's Spring 1960 assessment also notes that "[Nepal's diplomatic] flights into the outer space of world politics [were] occasioned at least in part by a desire to emulate India." NAI, MEA 6(27)-R&I/60 p. 8.

[262] As early as October 1954, Nepal's Ambassador to India N. B. Shah, cautions India expected Nepal to "cautiously proceed in the matter [China] and be in close consultation with the Government of India." Quoted in: http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2624/stories/20091204262407700.htm. Nehru's consequent discontent, in 1956, after Nepal's PM T. P. Acharya visits Beijing to sign the Sino-Nepal General Friendship Agreement and recognizes Chinese sovereignty over Tibet: "they have not only bypassed us and practically ignored us, but have done so with discourtesy." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 390.

[263] Jagat Mehta recalls, after a visiting Nepal in 1958: "while BP Koirala did not want to alienate India, Nepalese nationalism was inclined to be neutral between India and China, and this provoked anger in India … by 1959, the hatred of overlordship of India had become part of rising Nepalese nationalism." Mehta, *Tryst betrayed*, 111. See also opposition party protests during Nehru's visit in 1959: NAI, MEA 6(27)-R&I/59 p. 7 of June report.

[264] Based on "Fact sheet of Nepal's Diplomatic relations, 1951-71" in Muni, *Foreign policy of Nepal*, 255-64.

Koirala was aware of India's concerns about China, and up to a certain point, Nehru understood and accepted his explanations about domestic compulsions.[265] But the rift kept widening in 1959-60. Koirala kept emphasizing Nepal's quest for "independence" and visited Beijing to sign a boundary agreement despite Indian opposition.[266] On the other hand, to Kathmandu's chagrin, Nehru stated that Nepalese and Indian security were indivisible.[267] B. P. Koirala's increasingly isolated position in Kathmandu, amidst his party's rising factionalism, further aggravated Indian concerns about the sustainability of his government and effects on Nepal's capability to ensure its own security.

*

Under the new circumstances after the late 1950s, India's Nepal policy and Nehru's option to engage the monarch after his coup in 1960, were constrained by two assessments: 1) the external threat of China, including the possibility of a war involving Nepal; and 2) the internal rise of King Mahendra, accentuated by the decline of India's preferred democratic faction, the Nepali Congress. Nehru knew that holding on to the democratic experiment in Kathmandu risked becoming a security liability for India,

---

[265] B. P. Koirala recognized that by 1959 India-China relations had reached "a very explosive point", that "a faction in the Government of India felt that I was becoming too friendly with China" and of "that perhaps I would be too independent and I was critical of India's unnecessary interference in our affairs", but despite this Nehru was "understanding" and "considerate," quoting him as saying: "if it helps you to create a nationalist image for yourself by taking us to task, you are welcome to do that, because we do not want to destroy your image as a nationalist." Tripathi, *Nepal in transition*, 50, 52-3.

[266] On China's invitation, the Nepalese PM recalls the Indian ambassador's warning: "it will not be good if you visit somewhere else before coming to India. You should come to us first." Koirala, *Atmabrittanta*, 207.

[267] B. P. Koirala recalls difficulties in drafting a joint communiqué during Nehru's visit in June, 1959: "our [Nepal] emphasis was on independence, whereas his was on a 'special relationship'". Koirala, *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollections*, 208. The rift escalated after Nehru's Nov. 27 statement that "any aggression on Nepal will be considered an aggression on India." Koirala responds on Nov. 29: as a "fully sovereign independent nation", Nepal "decides its external and home policy according to its own judgment and its own liking without ever referring to any outside authorities" Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 398, 400-1. See also Amb. B. Sahay's earlier assessment, in September: "China with the help of her friends in Nepal is now trying to wean it away from India and the Nepalese Government is to some extent responsive to such attempts." NAI, MEA 6(27)-R&I/59 pp. 3-4.

whether by pushing King Mahendra even further into Chinese hands, or by plunging his Kingdom into civil war. It was up to the King to give the final blow and bury democracy. India regretted this, but was ready to adjust and engage with reality to pursue its immediate interests.[268]

2. Ceylon 1956

Ceylon in the 1950s posed a dual test to the Indian principle of non-interference. Up to 1956, Nehru faced a deeply conservative regime that had reluctantly accepted independence from Britain and pursued a pro-West foreign policy that clashed with India's non-alignment. After a regime change in 1956, a reformist government openly associated with non-alignment and offered New Delhi greater political influence in Ceylon, but implemented an ethno-nationalist agenda that fueled domestic conflict, alienated the Tamil minority, and threatened the neighbour's domestic stability. India's focus on engagement during the period demonstrates that while morally averse to Ceylon's illiberal tilt and concerned about its impact on the island's long-term security and order, the immediate prospects of greater influence over a geopolitically realigned regime prevailed.

*

In late May, 1958, Ceylon was swept by a wave of deadly race riots, taking the lives of hundreds, possibly more than one thousand people, most of which from the island's

---

[268] King Mahendra would keep playing the "China card" just as his democratic predecessors had done, but never crossed India's red security lines and stayed neutral during the 1962 India-China war. Seeking to assuage India, he sold himself as a "political realist" committed to "non-alignment". Bir B. S. D. Mahendra, *Statement of principles, Foreign Policy speeches* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Panchayat Affairs, 1964), 1-5.

Tamil minority. The violence raged on for weeks while the Sinhala-majority government looked on, wavering between passive negligence and active connivance.[269] Eventually, as chaos persisted and blood kept spilling, the Governor-General O. E. Goonetilleke declared emergency and deployed the military, noting that the riots had been "the work of a Master Mind … a time-bomb set about two years ago, which has now exploded."[270]

He was referring to Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and his rise to power after the 1956 parliamentary elections, a pivotal moment which, according to historian K. M. De Silva classified as "a change of regime rather than merely a change of government."[271] Bandaranaike's victory had brought a revolution in political leadership by replacing the conservative United National Party (UNP) elite that ruled since independence, by adopting socialist and populist redistribution policies benefitting the lower- and middle-class Sinhala majority community in the South of the country, and by enacting a major geostrategic shift away from the West and towards the emerging non-aligned block in Asia.[272]

PM Bandaranaike's strategy of mass mobilization targeting the Sinhala majority also unleashed a profound socio-economic modernization, which contributed to an unprecedented expansion of Ceylon's democratic system, but also fueled its consequent

---

[269] For a critical account of the government's role during the riots as either conniving with "goons," its delayed police response, and belated declaration of emergency by PM Bandaranaike (May 27), see Tarzie Vittachi, *Emergency '58: the story of the Ceylon race riots* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1958), 85-90.

[270] Vittachi, *Emergency*, 79.

[271] K. M. De Silva and W. Howard Wriggins, *J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: a political biography v.1* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 17.

[272] On the elite structure of Ceylon's political leadership in the 1950s, and the role of the Bandaranaike and Obeyesekere families under the British colonial regime, see De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.1*, 4-7; K. M. De Silva and W. Howard Wriggins, *J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: a political biography v.2* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

ethnic conflict.[273] Tensions between the Sinhala and Tamil communities dated back to the colonial period, and the Tamil demands were often ambiguous, varying between full independence, some type of confederation with India, or autonomy within a federal Ceylon.[274]

But Bandaranaike's 1956 alliance with Buddhist extremists and subsequent policies of *Ceylonisation* to favor the Sinhala majority played a determinant role in letting the genie of ethnic conflict out of its bottle and run amok.[275] Initiatives such as the "Sinhala Only" Language Act irreversibly upset the status quo of linguistic parity and initiated a spiraling Sinhala chauvinist competition between the ruling parties.[276] Most devastatingly to social stability, the 1956 "revolution" massively reduced the Tamil access to key sectors in the state – from education and administration to the military – thus feeding a sense of discrimination that led to the minority's gradual radicalization.[277] All this eventually

---

[273] In 1931 Ceylon became the first Asian country to adopt universal suffrage and held general elections, 20 years ahead of India. But the socio-economic transformations and ethnic conflict of the 1950s were so drastic, also threatening conservative interests, that they were one of the main reasons for the attempted military coup of 1962: Donald L. Horowitz, *Coup theories and officers' motives: Sri Lanka in comparative perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). For the roots of the conflict, see Neil DeVotta, *Blowback: linguistic nationalism, institutional decay, and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[274] For the gradual assertion of Tamil political activism in Ceylon, and the reasons behind S. J. Chelvanayakam's split form the ACTC, in Dec. 1949, to create the Federal Party and demand full federalism, see A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *S. J. V. Chelvanayakam and the crisis of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism, 1947-1977: a political biography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 23-77.

[275] The ruling United National Party (UNP) split in 1951, with Bandaranaike creating the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) under the Sinhala Maha Sabha, which he had founded in 1934. As he converts to Buddhism and speaks of it repeatedly for "national progress" and "world peace," his ethno-religious nationalism becomes increasingly apparent thereafter. On Bandaranaike as a failed "arbiter" to contain the devastating effects of his policies, see James Manor, *The expedient utopian: Bandaranaike and Ceylon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 245-318.

[276] The UNP had favoured linguistic parity between Sinhala and Tamil, based on the 1953 recommendations of the Official Language Commission, but backtracked in 1955 under pressure from the SLFP and Bandaranaike's "Sinhala Only" policy. De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.1*, 297-302. For the UNP's new approach, see Jayewardene's speech in parliament, 19 Oct. 1955: G. E. P. de S. Wickramaratne, ed. *Ceylon and Kotelawala: a selection of speeches made in the Legislature in Ceylon by John Lionel Kotelawala, 1931-1956* (Dehiwela: n/a, 1964), 292-301.

[277] Symbolically, after 1954, it would take twenty years for another PM to visit Jaffna – the country's second-largest city and hub of Tamil culture: Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 102. On PM. S. Bandaranaike's decision not to visit in Dec. 1964, after a devastating cyclone:

plunged the country into one of Asia's most violent ethnic conflicts and civil wars, of which the May 1958 riots had only been the opening act.

Conflicted but strategic engagement

India's reaction to Ceylon's illiberal turn in 1956 was one of conflicted restraint. On the one hand, it welcomed Bandaranaike's reformism, and his personal profile and policy agenda were more favorable to India, promising greater influence. On the other hand, however, PM Nehru and his diplomats in Colombo worried about his *Ceylonisation* policies because they were seen as sowing the seeds for a conflict that could devastate the island's fragile stability and spillover across the Palk Straits to affect India's own domestic security, given the links with the Tamils of Southern India. I

ndia's top diplomat in Colombo at the time, acting High Commissioner M. M. Nair, reflects this conflicted assessment, derogatorily describing the outgoing elites as having been "drunk with power," and that India should therefore welcome the "advent to power of people from the middle and lower middle class … who discarded [Western] coat and trousers in favour of the [local] plain shirt and *dhoti*," even while cautioning that "the seeds of [ethnic] discord were also sowed".[278]

Beyond this rising domestic conflict between the Sinhala and Tamil communities, New Delhi's assessment was further constrained by negotiations on the fate of a specific sub-

[http://transcurrents.com/tc/2009/01/why_sirimavo_refused_to_visit.html. On the Tamils from an over-represented to an under-represented minority in higher education and civil administration, see Asoka Bandarage, *The separatist conflict in Sri Lanka: terrorism, ethnicity, political economy* (London: Routledge, 2009), 29-109. Similarly, between 1950s and 1960s, military commissions in Ceylon Light Infantry awarded to Tamils fall from 18% to 4%. Horowitz, *Coup Theories*, 57-75.

[278] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 pp. 1, 15-18.

community of around one million Tamils that had settled on the island more recently, during colonial rule, to work in the tea plantations, and which Colombo saw as aliens that had to be deported back to India as soon as possible.[279] A complex bilateral agreement reached in 1954 for their repatriation or integration had faced severe obstacles and while Nehru hoped to resuscitate it, PM Bandaranaike gave it the final death blow immediately after coming to power, demanding the deportation of all plantation Tamils to India.[280]

This uncooperative attitude bordered on confrontation, and was rooted in the wave of Sinhala ethno-nationalism that swept the island after 1956: given that "anti-India" slogans had become a rallying cry on the streets of Colombo, a diplomatic report euphemistically notes that there was "not the same anxiety now on the part of Ceylon to come to any reasonable solution [on the stateless Tamils]" and that the "Indo-Ceylon problem" had witnessed "little progress" and thus remained in "cold storage."[281]

Yet, despite principled discomfort with Ceylon's illiberal turn, concerns about long-term stability, and interrupted negotiations about the stateless Plantation Tamils, Nehru refrained from making any condemnatory statement or applying coercion.[282] Instead, he

---

[279] Negotiations about the fate of the "Plantation Tamils" dated back to the colonial period, but became contentious after Ceylon disenfranchised the community, with the Ceylon Citizenship bill (1948) and the Indian and Pakistani Residents Citizenship Act (1949). For India's reactions, see Avtar S. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka relations and Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict: documents, 1947-2000 v.2* (New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001), 453-67. PM J. Kotelawala reflects the hostile approach, speaking to parliament on Feb. 2, 1954, after the first agreement with India: "We cannot afford to have this extra population. We must send back as many as we can – the whole lot if we can – but not by forcible repatriation." Wickramaratne, *Ceylon and Kotelawala*, 219. See also John L. Kotelawala, *An Asian Prime Minister's story* (London: G. G. Harrap, 1956), 98-111.

[280] For Nehru's approach, see his letter to Kotelawala in Jan. 1956 [SWJN REF XX], and his Feb. 23, address to parliament: MEA, "FAR 1956," 22. Despite a revised agreement in Oct. 1954, in 1955 Ceylon rejected 96% of a total 28,000 applications for citizenship. MEA, "Annual Report 1955-56," (New Delhi 1956), 12. By 1959 more than 900,000 Tamils remained stateless. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 805.

[281] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 p. 3, 6.

[282] Nehru on Sept. 2, 1957, address to parliament: "we are interested in finding a solution" but "so far as we are concerned, strictly, legally and constitutionally, it [Indians in Ceylon] is none of our problem. They are not our nationals. It is a problem of Ceylon." MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1957," (New Delhi 1958), 174. And in Apr. 1958: "I would beg this House to remember that we should not be too eager to condemn any

fended off domestic pressures to take a more assertive stance on Ceylon's domestic politics at bilateral and multilateral levels, including from influential members within his own party.[283] While he continued to express concern about Ceylon after 1956, in particular on the fate of the stateless people, Nehru also recognized that Bandaranaike was in no rush to solve the issue with India. In the Indian Prime Minister's view it was thus useless, and possibly also counterproductive to the security of the Tamils – whom Sinhala extremists often referred to as a "fifth column" – to further pressure Colombo.[284] A few months after the 1958 riots, he therefore questioned his restless parliamentarians:

> *What is the good of telling me 'Go and solve it immediately'? How am I to solve it [problem of Ceylon Tamils] immediately? I cannot. Am I to threaten Ceylon and make the lot of those people and everybody much worse? It might satisfy some kind of ambition on our part to display the strong hand, the fist. We do not normally, when we are in the right mood, display the fist to anybody.[285]*

Nehru had, for years, cautioned against any coercive attitude against Ceylon, warning that such an approach would only confirm the island's deeply held suspicions about Indian expansionism and drive it further away, into Western hands. His restrained approach to the revolutionary "regime change" of 1956 was therefore a result of the overriding positive assessment about Bandaranaike as a harbinger of greater Indian political and geostrategic influence.[286]

Government, or the Ceylon Government, merely because it has not solved it quickly." MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1958," (New Delhi 1959), 71.

[283] Despite being under control of Nehru's INC under Chief Minister K. Kamaraj (1954-63), Tamil Nadu's politics in the 1950s were dominated by assertive demands for greater recognition of Tamil language, with separatist undertones and with links to the Tamil cause in Ceylon. Lloyd I. Rudolph, "Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 03 (1961).

[284] Paradoxically, despite being a majority, Sinhala anxiety about the Tamils and their connections to India thus reflects an intense minority and insecurity complex. This approach is, for example, betrayed in PM Sirimavo Bandaranaike's reference to Plantation Tamils as an "alien population" and a threatening "problem" for the "indigenous" population, in a Nov. 10, 1964 speech: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 845.

[285] Dec. 9, 1958: MEA, "FAR 1958," 319.

[286] Following Nehru's May 1957 visit to Colombo, the joint statement included eleven paragraphs on various global issues reflecting a geopolitical realignment, but only one short reference to "outstanding

Conservative Ceylon's alignment with the West

> *Ceylon cannot politically or economically stand by herself. A glance at the map is sufficient to demonstrate this. When the British Empire fades away, where will Ceylon go? She must associate herself, economically at least, with larger groups and India is obviously indicated.*[287]

J. Nehru (1939)

The British Empire had formally faded away when the Indian Ocean island attained independence in 1948, but despite Nehru's expectations, Ceylon did not "associate herself" with India. The state remained a South Asian abnormality in more than one way. Unlike the anti-colonial mass mobilization on the subcontinent, Ceylon's anglophile elites had only reluctantly agreed to negotiate their transition to freedom, and the new state's constitution and military forces remained tied to the Crown in London.[288] Unlike most of the other South Asian leaders, the first Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake (1947-52) had therefore remained "singularly immune to the attractions of the contemporary Indian political scene."[289] This explains the prevalent Indian view that "Ceylon's ties with Britain in 1948 were generally much closer than those of India's. … [and the country] continued in a pro-British and culturally Anglo-Saxon orientation."[290]

[bilateral] problems." Confronted with this by parliamentarians upon returning to Delhi, Nehru gives vague and evasive responses: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1957," 95-7.

[287] After returning from Ceylon, in a report the INC President: Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 10, Second Series* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1977), 61.

[288] Reflected already in 1939: "it is unfortunate that many of the leaders of Ceylon should help in creating barriers between India and Ceylon. They do not seem to realize that India can do well without Ceylon in the future to come, [but] Ceylon may not be able to do without India". Nehru, *SWJN SS v10*, 61. Only 59 of 101 members of Ceylon's House of Representatives voted for independence in 1947. Until 1972, the British monarch remained as Ceylon's head of state, and the British Privy Council the final court of appeal.

[289] De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.1*, 16.

[290] Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 138-9.

The latent Indian discomfort was both ideological and cultural, rooted in its view of the Ceylonese leadership as entitled, conservative and committed to a political system that preserved socio-economic entitlement and a strategic alignment with the West.[291] This led to occasional tensions in bilateral relations after 1947, but escalated under PM John Kotelawala (1953-56) who pursued an aggressive policy of strategic and economic diversification that risked reducing Indian influence on the island and impinged on its security interests. "Sir" Kotelawala's personal style, as a conservative and brash British Army veteran, was the almost perfect opposite of Nehru, and his repeated statements underlining that "Ceylon is in many ways as different from India as England is from the European continent,"[292] or that the "English gave us freedom," were not taken lightly in New Delhi.[293]

Kotelawala recognized that "Ceylon had everything to gain by a policy of good neighbourliness towards India."[294] But as with all of India's smaller neighbors, and building on his predecessor's policies, he quickly adopted an activist foreign policy that strived to increase the country's security by a strategy of extra-regional balancing and strategic diversification. This was based on a deeply held Ceylonese threat assessment of India that cut across parties and ideological differences. In a memo to his PM D. Senanayake (1952-1954), minister J. R. Jayawardene, who was to become President in the 1980s and widely known as "Yankee Dick" for his pro-American stances, first defined the country's new balancing strategy, based on two main threats: excessive dependence

---

[291] See e.g. Nehru's derogatory reference to Kotelawala as "a landlord and therefore a conservative" in Oct. 20, 1954 conversation with Zhou Enlai: Nehru, *SWJN SS v27*, 22.

[292] Kotelawala, *Asian Prime Minister*, 98.

[293] Wickramaratne, *Ceylon and Kotelawala*, 280. Symbolically, in April 1954 Queen Elizabeth became the first foreign head of state to visit Ceylon after Kotelawala took over as PM.

[294] Kotelawala, *Asian Prime Minister*, 94.

on India, and a possible Communist takeover, especially with support from Southern Indian states. Comparing the island's position to that of Britain facing Europe and to that of the 19th century United States in Northern America, he concluded that "India should not be allowed to proclaim a 'Monroe Doctrine' in the Indian Ocean" and stressed the need for Sri Lanka to find extra-regional allies.[295]

After becoming Prime Minister in 1954, J. Kotelawala similarly underlined such need for external security guarantees, proclaiming that "the day Ceylon dispensed with the Englishmen completely, the Island would go under India" and that "if South India goes communist, as it is going now, [it] invades us."[296] His open denunciation of Communism served the dual purpose to rally domestic support among the conservative electorate, and to signal Ceylon's alignment with the Western block. He thus promised to "hound out Communism from this country" and labeled the Soviet Union as "Ceylon's Enemy no. 1."[297] To greatest Indian annoyance, however, were his assertive stances in favor of the West, openly denouncing Communism and comparing it to a "new colonialism"[298], especially at the Bandung summit of April, 1955."[299]

Beyond the rhetoric of anti-Communism and diplomatic disputes with India, he pursued association with the emerging security architecture sponsored by the United States across

---

[295] Memo to the PM on March 19, 1954, in Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 8-9.

[296] May 26, 1955, speech in which he also makes repeated references to the work of Indian strategist Panikkar as indicating New Delhi's quest to transform the island into a "forward defense area" for geopolitical control of the Indian Ocean. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, xxvi, 11-16. On March 5, 1954, he linked the issue to the minority Tamils in Ceylon: "I am not frightened by immigrants, but I am frightened of immigrants going communist." Wickramaratne, *Ceylon and Kotelawala*, 226.

[297] Wickramaratne, *Ceylon and Kotelawala*, 197, 280. Moscow opposed Ceylon's entry to the UN until 1955.

[298] "The old colonialism had at least the redeeming virtue of a democratic basis. The new colonialism is nakedly totalitarian in intention and effect" Kotelawala, *Asian Prime Minister*, 8.

[299] He recalls Nehru reproaching him: "Why did you do that, Sir John? Why did you not show me your speech before you made it?" He also quotes from a letter from India's former Home Minister C. Rajagopalachari accusing him of having behaved "like a jackdaw pretending that it had the plumage of a peacock." Kotelawala, *Asian Prime Minister*, 187, 74.

Asia, notably by allowing United States military airplanes carrying French troops to Indochina to stopover in Colombo and, in August of 1954, lobbying for Ceylon and the other Colombo Powers (including India, Pakistan and Burma) to join the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).[300]

While PM Kotewala almost caved in to American pressure to end Ceylon's Rubber-Rice agreement with China (signed in 1952), and his visit to the United States in the Fall of 1954 assumes symbolic importance, none of the more provocative projects against Indian security concerns are implemented − especially a 1950 proposal for a major U.S. air base in Ceylon. Initially suggested by Colombo, the idea illustrates a typical dilemma in Washington's South Asia policy during the 1950s: on the one hand, skepticism about India's non-alignment and incapacity drove the temptation to take advantage of PM Kotewala's overtures, in order to enlist Ceylon's support for anti-Communist containment in Asia; and, on the other hand, concern that an exaggerated threat assessment and American involvement could lead to Indian hostility or destabilize the island's domestic politics to the extent of a Communist take-over.[301]

The 1956 regime change set this tension to rest, as Ceylon ended its pro-West tilt and the new PM Bandaranaike embraced a non-aligned position that is more palatable to Nehru.[302] Despite occasional concern about "radical leftist elements" in the "nationalist-

---

[300] Kotelawala, *Asian Prime Minister*, 128. On SEATO, see Wickramaratne, *Ceylon and Kotelawala*, 271-7.

[301] See e.g. June 1953 cable by Amb. Satterthwaite in Colombo: Indian reaction "almost certain to be negative and should be a matter of some concern" http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v11p2/d964. See also J. F. Dulles Oct. 1953 instructions to bring Ceylon "back in step" against "Commie China", but cautions that "excessive amount of aid to Ceylon at this time might react disadvantage US by damaging our relations with other countries in the area." http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v11p2/d981 and his brief to Eisenhower on Ceylon's entry into SEATO: http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v11p2/d997

[302] This threat assessment reflected in J. F. Dulles' attempts to seek a workaround to the Battle Act to supply Ceylon with aid, which is signed during his visit to Colombo on March 11, 1956, just a few weeks before

neutralist government" American assessments concurred that Ceylon's geostrategic pivot was overall beneficial, given that India "would probably try to bolster Bandaranaike in the event of a major challenge to him by either communist or old-style conservative forces".[303]

Nehru had been well aware of Ceylon's balancing strategy, and despite concern at this pro-Western tilt, he chose to wait it out. In a 1952 letter to his regional Chief Ministers, while Washington debated Colombo's proposal to host an American air base, he confides:

> *they [Ceylon] are a little afraid of this great big giant of a country overlooking them and fear always leads to wrong action. If we threaten them, we only increase their fear. Therefore, I have avoided speaking the language of threats and have tried to be friendly to them even if they have acted in an improper way.[304]*

Recalling his time in Colombo (1954-56), Indian High Commissioner B. N. Chakravarty, notes that Ceylon looked at India with a "mix of fear and jealousy", afraid of becoming a Taiwan vulnerable to Chinese invasion, as Kotelawala had often propagated. Chakravarty goes on to note that the island's "fear of India is perhaps genuine" because Ceylon "does not believe in our repeated assurances that we have no designs against her (…) [and we thus have to] understand the psychology of a small neighbour and be very careful in our words and deeds."[305]

While in Colombo, B. N. Chakravarty had, in 1955, warned against the influence of Kotelawala's coterie of pro-Western advisers, including J. R. Jayewardene and C. E. L.

---

the elections: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d136 After meeting PM Kotelawala, he reassures Eisenhower: "They are 100 percent anti-commie and very apprehensive of Nehru's policies." https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d138

[303] National Intelligence Estimate, March 1958: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v15/d182

[304] July 5, 1952: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, liii.

[305] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 p. 6. In 1953, U.S. Ambassador in Colombo reports that "high Indian military personages are known to have told their friends in the Ceylon Government that India is determined some day to get possession of the great naval base at Trincomalee" http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v11p2/d964

Wickremesinghe, and cautioned that "we should not, therefore, be surprised to see Ceylon taking a stand, in the international sphere, often opposed to that of India."[306] In the wake of the election campaign, he goes on to clearly identifiy Bandaranaike, from the opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), as a trusted friend of India and as one of the few voices opposing the government's pro-West policy.[307]

So it is not surprising that when Bandaranaike was elected, in the Spring of 1956, New Delhi rejoiced at the prospect of Ceylon finally associating itself with India and non-alignment.[308] An Indian diplomatic note from Colombo, described it as being "in a sense, a revolution" because Kotelawala ("slowly becoming a dictator"), had been "definitely inclined to toe the American line" and "took no sincere steps to settle the Indo-Ceylon problem or to support India its foreign policies"[309]. In New Delhi, the new alignment with Bandaranaike was officially welcome by the Ministry of External Affairs as leading to a "general agreement between him [Bandaranaike] and the Prime Minister of India on almost all important international problems".[310]

Looking back at 1956, Vincent Coelho, who would serve as Indian High Commissioner in Colombo during the 1970s, described the transition as a watershed moment in India-Ceylon relations, because the "traditional association with Britain … then finally gave place to "a new concept of third-wordliness" and "a close similarity between Ceylon's approach to international relations and India's."[311] This new association was formalized

---

[306] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 p. 5.

[307] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 p. 4.

[308] Amal Jayawardane, ed. *Documents on Sri Lanka's foreign policy: 1947-1965* (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2004), 5-11.

[309] 1956 assessments by Assistant High Commissioner M. M. Nair: NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 pp. 1, 15.

[310] MEA, "Annual Report 1956-57," (New Delhi 1957), 13.

[311] Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 140.

when, in late 1957, a little over a year after being elected, PM Bandaranaike formally took over the two remaining British military bases on the island, while declaring that "today our independence is complete".[312]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

India's posture towards the massive changes in Ceylon during the 1950s illustrates a difficult dilemma facing Nehru and Indian policymakers in the region: before 1956, conservative regimes in Colombo actively defied India's security interests by pursuing a pro-West balancing strategy, but delivered in terms of domestic order and stability. Conversely, after 1956, the new reformist regime delivered to Indian security concerns by associating with non-alignment, but its illiberal policies destabilized the island's ethnic balance, which threatened Indian interests in order and stability. As in the case of Nepal, these dual concerns (external security and internal stability) were seen as interdependent, New Delhi therefore seeking to pragmatically pursue a fine balance between both, but eventually forced to compromise on the latter after 1956. Despite its liberal identification with the plight of the Tamil minority and concern at the long-term effects of Ceylon's illiberal tilt after 1956, India's more immediate focus on political and security influence was to prevail via engagement.

---

[312] At the formal hand-over ceremony, which began phased British withdrawal from the Katunayake air and Trincomalee naval bases, respectively on Oct. 15 and Nov. 1, 1957: S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, *Speeches and writings* (Colombo: Department of Broadcasting and Information, 1963), 400.

3. Burma 1962

The military coup of March 1962 terminated 15 years of democracy in Burma. The deposed Prime Minister U Nu had been one of Nehru's closest allies, receiving Indian support for his democratization efforts in the 1950s, which also led to a joint commitment to non-alignment. Despite these strong links, Nehru immediately recognized the new military regime, India becoming the first country to do so, and thereafter pursued a policy of engagement. Beyond just pragmatism, incapacity or lack of alternatives, India's response was rooted in a dual assessment about the declining capacity of U Nu to deliver on two fronts: 1) on the external front, the possibility of an impending military conflict with China, warranted at least a neutral, if not cooperative regime in Rangoon; 2) on the internal front, Prime Minister U Nu was weakened and isolated, his democratic regime unable to tackle domestic insurgencies and ensure the safety of the large Indian diaspora. Both factors directly impinged on Indian security interests.

*

As per his day of birth and a Buddhist tradition, Prime Minister U Nu was known as "Saturday's son," but it was on a Friday – March 2, 1962 to be exact – that he was brusquely woken up, around 2:00 a.m., by the sight of a pistol and an Army official shouting "we caught the maggot" into a walkie-talkie.[313] This was a coup: that same day, the Burmese Army Chief, General Ne Win and his Union Revolutionary Council

---

[313] U Nu, *U Nu: Saturday's son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 236, 343.

suspended the democratic constitution of 1948 and dissolved both houses of parliament.[314] U Nu would remain under detention for the next twelve years.

Just a few weeks earlier, Burma's democratically elected Prime Minister had visited India to lecture on the concepts of *mingala* (virtue) and *myitta* (universal love) in the holy Hindu city of Varanasi, in the company of Prime Minister J. Nehru, whom he believed to be a reincarnation of emperor Ashoka and tried to convert to Buddhism. [315] Nehru reciprocated the respect, albeit in secular terms: India's ties to Burma constituted "a special relationship," because it was "nearer to us than any foreign country."[316]

Since at least 1948, when U Nu's newly independent government survived a Communist coup with the military assistance from Nehru, [317] India had been deeply committed to ensure the success of Burmese attempts to co-opt the country's minorities through an inclusive, parliamentary democracy, including a hybrid "liberal-socialist" and federal constitution.[318] Nowhere was this quasi-alliance more apparent than in their joint foreign policy of the 1950s to develop the "third way" of non-alignment, which led to intense coordination, whether on the Colombo Powers after 1952, on the tripartite *Panchsheel* initiative of 1954, or on how to engage the United States, the Soviet Union or China,

---

[314] Gen. Ne Win would go on to declare the "Burmese Way to Socialism" on April 30, 1962, and created the one-party rule by Burmese Socialist Program Party, in July, which lasted until 1988.

[315] He visited India between Jan. 11-17: Nu, *Saturday's son*, 235-6.

[316] March 17, 1955 letter, in Nehru, *SWJN SS v28*, 293. Nehru's links to Burma had been shaped much before independence, especially with Aung San, whose wife Khin Kyi served as ambassador to India.

[317] India's military assistance to the government arrived in mid-1949, "without which Burma might never have recovered," according to U Nu: *Saturday's son*, 192, 227.

[318] For the negotiated independence from the British and the new constitution, see John F. Cady, *A history of modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 544-72. On Burma as a "transitional society" in the 1950s, see Lucien W. Pye, *Politics, personality and nation building: Burma's search for identity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1962).

including at the United Nations.[319] As Den Xiaoping would later recall, U Nu was a "friend of Nehru … a pro-Indian element" and their relationship like one "between the student and his teacher."[320]

But just a few days after his great friend and student had been humiliated as a "maggot" and frogmarched into a Rangoon jail, Nehru ordered his Ambassador in Burma – in words that were "realistic and yet nostalgic at having to let U Nu down" – to formally recognize the new military regime.[321] On March 6th India became the first country, even before China, to offer a "statement of acknowledgment" which the generals had demanded as a prerequisite for diplomatic relations.[322] The following months further reflected New Delhi's concern to engage the military regime, and despite revolutionary changes in Burma – from a new constitution and single-party rule to isolationist economics that led to occasional tensions – bilateral relations gradually normalized over the next years.[323]

---

[319] At the UN, for example, Indian representatives supported Burmese denunciations of KMT forces operating with Western support from its territory and both countries' approaches overlapped on most global issues. India also represented Burma at several UN bodies. Uma Shankar Singh, *Burma and India, 1948-1962 : a study in the foreign policies of Burma and India and Burma's policy towards India* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1979), 155-216. For Nehru's influence on U Nu, see also William C. Johnstone, *Burma's foreign policy: a study in neutralism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 40-115; Nu, *Saturday's son*, 236-85.

[320] To an Albanian delegation, June 19, 1962: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110806

[321] According to Eric Gonsalves, deputy chief of mission in Rangoon (E-mail correspondence, July 3, 2015).

[322] As DCM in Rangoon, Eric Gonsalves recalls Nehru's instructions: "if the considered opinion of the Embassy [is] that we have to deal with the military government, we should go ahead and give them recognition." http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/ohericgonsalves.pdf pp. 33-34, see also MEA, "AR 61-62," 21. On delayed Chinese recognition: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118237. On U.S. "hesitation" to recognize the regime: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v23/d49.

[323] In June 1962, two Indian Navy vessels visit Burma on a goodwill visit and the President of India invites Gen. Ne Win to visit India MEA, "Annual Report 1962-63," (New Delhi 1963), 19. A 3-year trade agreement is signed on Dec. 24. MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1962," (New Delhi 1963), 323. 1963, May: India's deputy minister of external affairs, Dinesh Singh, visits Burma. 1964, February: Ne Win visits India to check on Nehru's health in a "dramatic demonstration to India … that Burma still considers India a friend." NAI, MEA HI/1012(12)/64-I p. 17.

Why did Nehru ditch his close friend and the Burmese democratic experiment to engage with one of Asia's most isolated military regimes? Two factors emerge: first, India's assessment that a rising threat from, and possible military conflict with China, warranted at least a neutral regime in Rangoon. Second, an assessment of the domestic situation showed that U Nu was isolated and his democratic regime incapable to tackle minority insurgencies, which threatened instability that could affect Indian border regions. Both factors were linked: to defeat the insurgents and to increase domestic support, U Nu had engaged in a pro-China tilt after 1960, which decreased Indian incentives to hold on to him.

Beijing's tightening Burma embrace

Despite the close collaboration of the 1950s, both countries were on diverging geostrategic paths, as Burma gravitated back to its Southeast Asian identity, which had been interrupted by annexation to the British Raj between 1885 and 1937. On the other hand, India's partition in 1947, with the creation of East Pakistan, and its introvert economic model had accelerated separation, further reducing New Delhi's relative influence in Burma, despite the personal link between Nehru and U Nu. Indian diplomats in Rangoon expressed concern, but there was little they could do, as the country became one of the Cold War's active fronts, with CIA-supported *Kuomintang* forces staging attacks against Communist China.[324]

---

[324] Burma had separated from India in 1938, and independence from Britain in 1948 further accelerated its geopolitical and economic gravitation away from the Indian subcontinent. Indian embassy reports thus note the rising influence of a) Thailand and Yugoslavia, especially in the defense sector after 1955 (NAI, MEA 1-4/55/55-BC(B), p. 25); b) Israel, especially after Ne Win's first visit abroad (in 1959), to Israel, whose local

Of greatest concern, as Burma moved eastwards, was the rising influence of Communist China against the backdrop of deteriorating Sino-Indian relations, which exposed the security of India's semi-enclaved Northeast to a Chinese incursion via Northern Burma. New Delhi thus saw the security of India to be dependent on the security and stability of Burma, in particular in its Northern areas.

Up to the mid-1950s, as India continued to engage China and signed the tripartite *panchsheel* agreement focusing on non-interference, Sino-Burmese relations developed under the guiding hand of Nehru.[325] U Nu had initially proceeded cautiously on the establishment of diplomatic relations and initial consultations about the border dispute, between 1954 and 1956, but as Beijing began courting and reassuring him, and he came under domestic pressure to curtail the various insurgency groups supported by China, his position became more flexible.[326]

India's initial reactions were mixed. In 1959, Ambassador L. Mehrotra's assessment was still positive, noting that "the border tension between India and China [has] brought Burma closer towards us," reflecting Burmese continued concern about Chinese

---

Embassy is described as "one of the most active [which] freely hob-nobs with all political groups" (NAI 3(12)-R&I/61-I p. 4); c) U.S., U.K. and Australian embassies in Rangoon described as "our rivals" (NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/60 p. 109); d) Pakistan, especially after dialogue between Ne Win and Ayub Khan flourishes after the latter's visit to Rangoon, in December of 1960 (NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/59 p. 84).

[325] U Nu refused to take major decisions on China without first consulting with Nehru. For example, when pressed by Zhou Enlai, in June 1954, to sign a bilateral border agreement, he interjects: "We should do as [suggested by Prime Minister Nehru]. We can first issue a joint statement and then consider signing an agreement." http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120364 U Nu would visit Beijing in Dec. 1954 to establish diplomatic relations, which was facilitated by Nehru during his prior visit to China in October, when he had cautioned Zhou Enlai to respect the Burmese border demands: "Supposing we publish a map showing Tibet as a part of India, how would China feel about it?" Nehru, *SWJN SS v27*, 20.

[326] In 1956, U Nu and Ba Swe (as the new Prime Minister) begin negotiating a border agreement in Beijing. U Nu seems bent on assuaging China, and even offers a tract of disputed territory to Beijing. While the agreement would only be signed a few years later, he claimed it as his success Nu, *Saturday's son*, 252-68.

incursions across the disputed border.[327] General Ne Win had, as head of the military caretaker government between 1958 and 1960, upped the ante by approving a first draft of the Sino-Burmese Border Agreement and Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression, during his January 1960 visit to Beijing.

After returning to power, U Nu was therefore under unprecedented pressure: his policy of tackling the minority insurgents through amnesties and appeasement had failed, the economic and military support from the USA had been scaled back as the *Kuomintang* operations fizzled out, his bargaining power with the Army had been significantly reduced, and India was involved in an escalating conflict with China. By reaching out to Beijing to get a final agreement on the disputed border, U Nu thus hoped out to flush out insurgents operating from China, and regain important domestic political support.

A first indication of the Indian concern at this strategy is reflected in a 1961 assessment that "there was excessive fraternization with China over the [1960] successful Sino-Burmese frontier settlement," that U Nu had taken with him "an unnecessarily large delegation to Peking," and that the Chinese "policy of improving relations with India's neighbors, if necessary by a special display of sweet reasonableness", had led the Burmese into "a sort of blind spot with regard to Chinese aggression in India."[328]

Nehru acknowledged that the border Treaty signed by U Nu affected Indian interests at the trijunction point and India accordingly sent protest notes to Beijing and Rangoon.[329] In public, Nehru fended off intense domestic pressure for him to prevent or counteract

---

[327] NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/59 p. 73 of August, 1959 report. According to a May, 1960 embassy assessment, Yangon also appreciated India's support to take on China on the border dispute, and for having been able to induce its Communists into the democratic system: NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/60 pp. 100-101.

[328] NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/61-I pp. 3, 7.

[329] MEA, "FAR 1961," 12-13, 33-4.

the Sino-Burmese rapprochement and border agreement with repeated references to the principle of non-interference.[330] More importantly, he emphasized that Indian pressure would only push Burma further into the Chinese embrace, eventually paralyzing U Nu:

> *"Burma is relatively a small country; on either side of Burma are these big countries China and India and Burma naturally feels a little apprehensive of both these countries … We are friends with it. Why do anything carelessly which might increase their fear or apprehension?"[331]*

In practice, however, Nehru was worried and India was running out of patience, time and options. Despite U Nu's immediate visit to New Delhi to assuage the Indian Prime Minister, it was clear that as a result of his attempt to take advantage of the Sino-Indian conflict to consolidate his domestic role, Burma had tilted towards Beijing.[332]

Commenting on "the Burmese honeymoon with the Chinese giant", the Indian Ambassador in Rangoon thus expressed concern that the "Burmese are more suspicious of us than of the Chinese whose achievements, intentions and policies are hardly known in this country but whose propaganda is often accepted at face value" and that "it is therefore incumbent on us using whatever means lie at our disposal to counteract Chinese influence."[333]

This was only reinforced when, in January of 1961, Zhou Enlai visited Burma to ratify the border agreement and offered a major loan for economic and technical cooperation

---

[330] Domestically, Nehru explained such limitations repeatedly before parliament. E.g. Feb. 1961: "we cannot ask any country not to make a proper treaty with China because China and we have fallen out." And in April: "when we were consulted at an early stage about their dealings with China, we told them to go ahead and get a good border settlement if they could. Of course, we told them not to do anything which would affect our interests … But our advice to them was to get a good settlement if they could." MEA, "FAR 1961," 33, 130.

[331] MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1959," (New Delhi 1960), 235.

[332] During Nov. 1960 visit to New Delhi, U Nu attempts to assuage Nehru on border treaty with China: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1960," 343. Indian ambassador R. S. Mani in Feb. 1961 notes that the agreement had only been possible because "realist elements in Burma, particularly in higher Army circles, realize[d] that the Sino-Indian dispute, more than anything else, helped to settle Burma's frontier disputes with the Chinese." NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/61-I p. 4.

[333] NAI, MEA 3(12)-HI/62 pp. 3, 14.

agreement, while also "pandering to the vanity of the Burmese by his lavish use of the phrase 'Your Excellency' while he addressed every Burmese audience as 'Pauk Phaws' [Kinsmen]".[334] This was, for the Indian ambassador, a clear sign that "China seems to be all set to invade the Burmese markets in a big way [and that] the loan agreement might constitute a threat to our own export promotion efforts in Burma."[335]

How was this honeymoon expected to end? In one of the last assessments prior to the March 1962 coup, in advance of a final meeting between Nehru and U Nu, ambassador R. S. Mani suggests that "U Nu's party circles [AFPFL-Clean] seem to think, in my opinion over-optimistically, that they know where to stop. (…) But if and when they [China] decide to extend their influence – say, when they find that they have sufficiently isolated India – it is doubtful if Burma will be smart enough to be able to counter the pressures."[336]

Such pragmatic, but also concerned Indian assessments were also rooted by the gradual disengagement of the United States, which India saw as the most reliable guarantee to mitigate Chinese pressure on Burma. Starting in 1950, Washington had been supporting the *Kuomintang* guerrilla operating from Eastern Burma against the PRC, which U Nu – with active support from India at the UN – had repeatedly denounced as a violation of the country's sovereignty and even lead to the suspension of American aid.[337] Relations

---

[334] NAI, MEA 6(12)-R&I/61 p. 2.

[335] NAI, MEA 6(12)-R&I/61 pp. 3-4. This coincides with the Chinese and Burmese armies launching a major coordinated offensive, "Mekong River Operation," against KMT bases north of Kengtung, in Shan State, with tacit, albeit secret approval of Rangoon.

[336] Aug. 21, 1961, to the Commonwealth Secretary: NAI, MEA 6(12)-R&I/61 p. 81. India was also concerned about increasing Chinese references to the border agreements with Burma and Nepal to pressure India. See e.g. meeting between Chinese MFA Director Zhang Wenji and Indian ambassador Parthasarathy in Beijing, July 17, 1961: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121626.pdf

[337] In March 1953, Burma ended all American assistance given its support for KMT operations.

improved with massive American economic and military assistance after 1955, reflecting Washington's concern to stem Communism and rope Burma into its security alliance.[338]

However, while there was increasing concern about U Nu's weakening regime and about the Army's rising influence under Ne Win, the United States gradually disengaged after reducing its threat assessment about Burma's impending collapse to Communism and also after failing to build a link to Ne Win.[339] Against this background, a 1961 Indian Embassy report from Rangoon warns that "with the dissolution of the pro-American influence in the armed forces, the pressure for shifting the foreign policy of Burma [towards the West] will be weakened."[340]

U Nu's decreasing domestic capacity to deliver

> *The best, almost indispensable, helmsman for steering this strait course [domestic order under democracy] is Premier U Nu.[341]*
>
> J. Nehru (1954)

U Nu may have seemed "almost indispensable" and firmly in command of Burma's democratic regime in 1954, but it soon became clear to New Delhi that a lagging

---

[338] J. F. Dulles visits Rangoon in Feb. 1955 but is not able to persuade U Nu to join SEATO: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v22/d15. See also June 1956 by Department of State counselor MacArthur supporting assistance: "Our decision may well be decisive in leading Burma down the path of closer relations and orientation towards the West or forcing it into close association and dependency on the Communist bloc." https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v22/d44

[339] Gen. Ne Win visits the United States in 1960, but the visit is deemed a "fiasco": https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v23/d62

[340] March 1961 report by CdA G. Ramachandran: NAI 6(12)-R&I/61 p. 15. The concerns reflect Indian knowledge about the shift in the Army's officer cadre, after Ne Win executed a purge to replace pro-American with pro-Chinese officials, in 1958. On American disengagement and the need for an alternative influence, Ambassador R. S. Mani views Ne Win's March 1961 visit to Moscow favorably: "[he] may have turned to the U.S.S.R. to fill the gap caused by the elimination of American technical assistance to the Army. From our point of view, if Burma had to turn elsewhere for filling this gap, it is better they turn to U.S.S.R. rather than China." NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/61-I p. 8.

[341] In instructions to the Indian embassy in Rangoon: NAI B/54/1333/4-5 p. 71.

economy and persistent insurgency were taking a toll on his leadership. India could – and lacking any credible alternative, would – cling on to U Nu, but it was well aware of the changing dynamics and, especially after 1955, the rise of rival centers of power with leaders that were less inclined towards India: besides factions within his own part, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), the Army's influence under Ne Win also kept growing.[342] After losing the 1956 elections, he returned to power in 1957, only to be coerced into accepting a military caretaker government (1958-1960).[343]

By the time he returned to power for a third time, in 1960, his domestic isolation was apparent – he started spending longer periods abroad for meditation, even while his parliamentary majority was being riddled by rivalries.[344] Despite seeking to reassure New Delhi by discounting the possibility of any immediate military coup, in 1961 the Indian Ambassador L. Mehrotra thus warned that "since the formation of General Ne Win's Caretaker Government, the Army, having tasted power, became a factor to reckon with in Burmese politics."[345]

Indian assessments about the growing isolation of U Nu, the rise of new centers of power, and the overall weakening of his democratic government, aggravated concerns about his

---

[342] Amb. K. K. Chettur June 1954 report on decline of U Nu an waning Indian influence: "[we must] prepare ourselves accordingly, for U Ba Swe who, it is clear, will not have the same affection for us or our policies which U Nu has" and therefore "any lose threads hanging about in so far as the relations between India and Burma are concerned, should be tied up before U Nu leaves the stage" NAI, MEA B/54/1411/4 pp. 58-59. And in 1955 report: "coolness towards India has been noticeable … Though at the top level ideological affinities and old ties are strong, the lower rungs of the Administration are often discriminating against the Indian population here" NAI B/54/1333/4-5 p. 64. On Ne Win's rising influence in the Army and in politics see NAI 1-4/55/55-BC(B), p. 85.

[343] In 1958, after the AFPFL and his government are ridden by defections, including the resignation Deputy PM U Ba Swe and 15 cabinet ministers, U Nu invites Ne Win to form caretaker government for a period of six months, which is subsequently extended. U Nu would return to power after the Feb. 1960 elections.

[344] By 1961, a visibly weakened U Nu takes two months off to meditate, while Ne Win expands his domestic and international support, going on several trips abroad. Internal party factions in the AFPFL resurface, including in U Nu's Union Party, which further erodes the government's parliamentary support.

[345] February report: NAI 6(12)-R&I/61 p. 14.

ability to deliver on two crucial domestic issues. First, the Burmese Prime Minister was losing the initiative on tackling a variety of insurgencies among the non-Burman ethnic minorities, both in the East and – to India's particular concern – also in the North. Because of its peripheral situation and fragile security conditions, India's Northeastern region remained under the control of the Ministry of External Affairs, and its latent instability took a turn for the worse in the 1950s, as a myriad of ethnic minorities launched armed rebellions, starting with the Nagas, in 1956, with support and training bases in East Pakistan.[346]

Despite new Indian Army deployments, vast parts of the Indo-Burmese border regions escaped any effective civilian or military control by either New Delhi or Rangoon, thus serving as a safe logistical corridor for rebels on both sides.[347] Impinging on Indian domestic security, such movements across the border were thus monitored regularly by Indian officials, and with added concern in the late 1950s, given growing indications of possible support from China, via insurgent groups in Northern Burma.[348]

Such assessments soon mirrored the severe limitations of the democratic government in Rangoon and its Army to exercise control over Northern Burma.[349] India was therefore

---

[346] Naga insurgents were trained and armed in East Pakistan by Pakistan's Special Services Group. By 1961, the Naga Army was 5,000 strong, with 15,000 militiamen: Bertil Lintner, *Great game east: India, China, and the struggle for Asia's most volatile frontier* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2012), 106-12.

[347] In 1952, for example, the Naga Sawlaw tribe raids Indian territory and kills 90. Sent in for a punitive strike, the Burmese Union Military Police has to resort to heavy shelling. In March 1953, U Nu and Nehru meet in Manipur and cross into Burma, seeking to get Naga allegiance. Nu, *Saturday's son*, 228-31. In 1957, the Indian Army's Assam Rifles cross into Burmese territory to pursue Naga insurgents: B. Pakem, *India Burma relations* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1992), 122-4.

[348] In 1954, for example, on suggestion of the Governor of Assam and the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Nehru requests the Indian Embassy in Rangoon to confirm whether the Naga National Council's leader Z. Phizo had crossed into Burma: NAI, MEA B/54/1821/4. Similarly, in 1954-55, the IB also consults the MEA on number of Lushais joining the Burmese Army, expressing concern about the security of Manipur as militancy gains ground there: NAI, MEA B/54/6421/4 p. 6.

[349] Paradoxically, New Delhi often had much batter intelligence on Northern Burma via its Army officials posted in the Northeast, than via its Embassy in Rangoon and information provided by U Nu's

concerned at the effectiveness of U Nu's liberal policy of engaging his own insurgents with amnesties and inducements, including promises for further decentralization, a "federal principle" and the possibility for states to secede from the Union, which drew the ire of Burmese nationalists and the Army because it failed to stem insurgent violence and threatened the country's stability and cohesion.[350] This explains Nehru's restrained position when, in 1958, U Nu was coerced into accepting a military caretaker government led by Ne Win on the grounds of ensuring the state's immediate security and order: extraordinary circumstances required stretching the law.[351]

After 1960, U Nu's limitations in delivering on the issue of insurgency are further exposed in Indian assessments from Rangoon, including a concern that in order to consolidate domestic support among the Naga minority on its own territory, "Burma as a friendly neighbor was turning a blind eye to the activities of the [Indian] Naga rebels [operating across the border]."[352] Conversely, Ne Win had built some links with India, including

government, which was hardly in control of its Northern areas. See, for example, March 1955 meeting in Myitkyina, attended by Col. P. N. Luthra on behalf of the Governor of Assam, which catches the Indian Embassy by surprise: NAI, MEA 3-2/55-BC (B).

[350] After 1958, the Burmese military expresses rising discontent with U Nu's amnesties and liberal approach to the insurgents. In late 1962, he pushed on for a "federal principle," which further threatened territorial integrity in the military's view: Nu, *Saturday's son*, 332-44.

[351] Nehru's reaction on Oct. 2: "the political changes announced last week did not appear to have been an army *putsch*." Quoted in Singh, *Burma and India*, 74.

[352] For example, after Indian Nagas shoot down an Indian Air Force DC3 plane and cross into Burma to hold its crew captive there, Amb. Mani complains to Burmese deputy Foreign Minister, in May 1961, but recognizes that "the main difficulty is that the Burmese will not be able at present to translate their good intentions into effective action, owing to the treacherousness of the terrain and paucity of personnel." The Burmese, he emphasizes, are "afraid that, if they go too far in our support, their own Burmese Nagas, who are now quiet, might start giving trouble" NAI, MEA 6(12)-R&I/61 p. 49, 83. An earlier embassy report, from February, had cautioned that "the [Indian] Naga rebels have a few friends in Burma" NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/61-I p. 8.

with Nehru, in 1959, as head of the caretaker government, and gave indications of a stronger, more effective response to address Indian concerns.[353]

A second issue on which U Nu had failed to deliver, and which affected India's response to the 1962 coup, was the safety of the large Indian diaspora in Burma – around one million people, most of which were either Indian citizens or stateless. Many of the wealthier Indians had left before or during the World War, but the flow was to accelerate after independence.[354] To great Indian alarm, U Nu's decreasing power translated into a rising wave of ethno-nationalist *Burmanization* policies, with new citizenship, land and commercial laws targeting the Indian community.[355] This had a devastating impact on their assets and working conditions, leading to mass emigration to the economically fragile "motherland", whose policy had been to encourage assimilation.[356]

As early as 1955, Indian assessments identify the issue as "a disturbing factor" in bilateral relations, expected to worsen with Burma's deteriorating economy and the rise of

---

[353] Ne Win had visited New Delhi in Oct. 1959, including a positive interaction with Nehru. Johnstone argues that they agreed to stand by the MacMahon line while negotiating with China, and discussed the benefits of governing border areas directly: Johnstone, *Burma's foreign policy*, 142-47.

[354] The share of Indians in Burma's total population ranged from 5 to 7% up to the 1940s, gradually declining thereafter. An estimated 550,000 Indians left between 1948 and 1968, with a peak in 1963-64. Nalini R. Chakravarti, *The Indian minority in Burma: the rise and decline of an immigrant community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 167-86.

[355] 1953: land nationalizations begins. 1954: Burma proposes draft extradition agreement, which New Delhi rejects, preferring to "link it up with the conclusion of an [more comprehensive] Immigration Agreement" in light of problems affecting the Indian community: NAI, MEA 3(1)BC(B)/58 p. 4. 1957: Burmese parliament amends immigration acts and authorities delay registration of more than 40,000 Indians: NAI 3(12)-R&I/58 p. 21. 1961: Burma bans all money order remittances to India. For precipitous fall in remittances, see Pakem, *India Burma relations*, 153.

[356] 1952 MEA report stresses: "first objective in regard to Indian overseas communities should be to help them to assimilate themselves to local conditions" NAI, MEA B/52/1335/4 p. 35. In 1954, the MEA instructs its embassy in Rangoon: "our policy is, of course, to encourage local Indian residents to acquire the nationality of the land of their adoption, and we would naturally be happy if the maximum number of old Indian residents applied for Burmese citizenship." NAI, MEA B/54/3012/4 p. 53.

Burmese and Buddhist extremism.[357] By 1961, with U Nu back in power, Ambassador R. S. Mani informs New Delhi that "the animosity towards Indian nationals in Burma continues unabated" developing into "a clear conflict between Indian national interests and the interests of Indian nationals in Burma."[358] To New Delhi's great distress, and in a last attempt to appease the rising wave of Burmese nationalism and save his government at the cost of further attacks on Indian migrants – most of which Muslims – U Nu supported the State Religion Promotion Act, in October 1961, making Buddhism the country's official religion.[359]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

From the mid-1950s onwards, India's influence on Burma's domestic affairs and foreign policy declined in tandem with the gradual weakening of the democratic governments in Rangoon and, in particular, Prime Minister U Nu's growing isolation and the rise of the Army as an alternative centre of power. The coup of March 1962 only formalized this process, delivering the final deathblow on a liberal experiment that had proved unable to tackle domestic insurgency and, in order to regain initiative, had gravitated towards China. Despite its principled preference and significant support for a democratic neighbour to the East, and Nehru's personal links to U Nu, India's response to the 1962 coup pursued engagement based on an external assessment of the rising threat of China, and on an internal assessment that indicated a lacking capability of Rangoon to deliver on

---

[357] See NAI, MEA B/54/1333/4-5 p. 51. Embassy report of 1955 notes that there is "a widespread feeling among Indians that there is no future for them in Burma (…) Even Indians nationals who have taken or applied for Burmese nationality are apprehensive of the future" NAI, MEA 1-4/55/55-BC(B), p. 67. Annual report for 1955: "If the present unsatisfactory economic conditions continue, the Burmese will very likely, increasingly blame Indians for their troubles" NAI, MEA 1-4/55/55-BC(B), p. 121.

[358] Amb. R. S. Mani, in Aug. 1961, to New Delhi: NAI, MEA 6(12)-R&I/61 pp. 83-84.

[359] Riots in November, including attacks on Indian mosques in Rangoon, prompt Amb. R. S. Mani to express his concern to the MEA's Foreign Secretary: NAI, MEA 6(12)-R&I/61 p. 121.

domestic order and security, whether on tackling insurgents or protecting Indian migrants from *Burmanization* policies.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the assessments that drove India's posture of engagement towards three illiberal regime changes in Nepal, Ceylon and Burma. In early 1962, Prime Minister J. Nehru faced authoritarian rule in Nepal (absolutist monarchy) and in Burma (military junta), and an increasingly illiberal state in Ceylon, which had steered towards ethnic conflict based on discriminatory policies towards the Tamil minority.

While the pattern of these assessments is analyzed in the conclusion of Part 1 of this dissertation, a few tentative conclusions can be drawn specifically from this period:

1. India's posture of engagement was driven by pragmatic assessments on the changing internal (political) and external (security) circumstances involving the neighboring countries, and respective implications for its own interests.

2. In terms of domestic politics of the neighboring country, India's assessment was principally driven by the quest to ensure domestic stability and order, reflecting a concern about the risk of crisis escalation spilling across borders and affecting its domestic security (especially in the case of Burma and Sri Lanka).

3. India's assessment was also driven by the neighboring regime's geopolitical alignments: in the cases of Nepal and Burma, the focus was on China, while in Sri Lanka it was on the West and the United States.

4. While morally and ideologically committed to the outgoing liberal regimes, India's political and security assessments prevailed, leading it to pursue a cooperative engagement of the new regimes.

5. Engagement was more out of choice than necessity: especially in the cases of Nepal and Sri Lanka, India could have used its leverage to pursue a more coercive posture, but refrained from doing so given its cost-benefit calculus in each case.

6. PM J. Nehru rejected extraordinary domestic pressures for India to adopt a coercive posture against the illiberal regimes in Nepal, Ceylon and Burma, not because of some principled commitment to non-interference, but because he saw it to be counterproductive to India's security interests (for example, by further pushing Nepal and Burma into Chinese hands).

7. As democratic regimes in Nepal and Burma failed to deliver, becoming a liability both to internal stabilization (political fragmentation and isolation) and external security (rapprochement with China), India's short-term imperatives prevailed, fueled by rising incentives to engage an authoritarian (illiberal) alternative.

CHAPTER 3 – COERCIVE INVOLVEMENT AMIDST POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION (1987-90)

> *Whether it is an attack from foreign forces, whether it is through internal dissension, whether it is through pressures, the system, the democratic system has held. Today it stands distilled by time and proved to the world that India's basic democratic strength cannot be changed. We stand for a politics of conciliation, not of confrontation, of solving problems by sitting down across the table, discussing them, solving them, sorting them out, preventing them from growing, preventing pressures from increasing to a point where our system will not be able to sustain them. [360]*

PM Rajiv Gandhi (1985)

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's quote above, given a little less than a year after Sikh bodyguards assassinated his mother, Indira Gandhi, typically reflects a principled Indian commitment to democracy as a morally superior form of government. It also contains, however, a rare assessment about the democratic "system" as the most effective model to diffuse a country's "internal dissension" and "pressures" in the long term.

While the young Indian Prime Minister was thus probably referring to successful peace agreements signed earlier that year in the insurgency-ridden states of Punjab and Assam, the fact that he delivered his speech at the National Defence College, with several references to South Asia's regional security, can also be interpreted as a portentous advice to its neighbors to emulate the virtues of the Indian democratic system.

In this Indian line of thought, failing to do so would sooner or later lead to: 1) an escalating regime crisis, with rising internal dissent and turbulence; 2) the consequent instability and disorder threatening India's domestic and external security interests, and

---

[360] Oct. 8, 1985, in New Delhi: MEA, "FAR 1985," 299.

therefore 3) a necessary Indian coercive posture, through involvement supporting regime change. Part II of the dissertation examines this causal link in India's regional crisis policy in greater detail, especially the short- and long-term calculus on how liberal or authoritarian regimes best deliver on India's security interests.

Given the objectives of this first part of the dissertation, however, the focus is on understanding the strategic nature of the assessments that drive India's crisis response posture. As predicted by PM R. Gandhi in 1985, India's neighbors faced extraordinary domestic pressures and dissent over the following years, resulting in deep regime crises and change. In Nepal, mass protests in 1990 forced an end to monarchical absolutism, returning the kingdom to multiparty democracy after thirty years. In Sri Lanka, the ethnic conflict turned into a civil war, as a new generation of militant Tamils began an insurgency for secession. And in Burma, General Ne Win's isolated military regime broke down under a mass pro-democracy uprising, in 1988.

Unlike in the 1950s, in all these three cases, India adopted a coercive posture, supporting liberalization. In Nepal and in Burma, it denounced the prevailing authoritarian regimes as unsustainable, openly siding with pro-democracy forces and calling for regime change. In Sri Lanka, it first pressurized the regime to pursue constitutional changes to end the ethnic conflict, and then intervened militarily to enforce a solution.

Such coercive involvement is particularly surprising given India's relative domestic and international weakness in the late 1980s: internally, New Delhi faced unprecedented levels of political dissent, insurgent violence and an uncertain economic transition, while externally it witnessed the collapse of its quasi-ally, the Soviet Union and an uncertain

153

environment. Despite such fragility, why did India adopt bold and coercive postures towards its neighbors, including a military intervention in Sri Lanka?

Exceptionalist narratives on Indian foreign policy frequently explain such coercive postures as reflecting an "idealist" turn to promote democratic values among its neighbors, as underlined by PM R. Gandhi's quote above about the righteousness and effectiveness of the "democratic system." Hegemonic narratives, in turn, explain India's coercive posture in the late 1980s as a realist reflex to maximize control over its neighbors and expand its security-umbrella. Beyond such simplistic explanations, a closer study of Indian strategic assessments explains how the crises were expected to affect India's domestic and external security interests.

1. Nepal 1990

In the spring of 1990, the Nepalese people took to the streets of Kathmandu in a mass movement to demand multi-party elections and parliamentary democracy. The uprising was fueled by an informal trade blockade, which New Delhi had enforced on the landlocked kingdom after a dispute in 1988, and throughout the protests the Indian government kept pressuring King Birendra to embrace democratic reforms – which eventually lead to a regime change in April of 1990. India's coercive posture was, however, determined by two prior security assessments about royal rule in Kathmandu: Birendra had been pursuing a strategy of extra-regional strategic diversification – especially with China – that threatened India's security and "special relationship" with Nepal; and while this lead to an escalating conflict in bilateral relations after 1987, the monarch persisted on his policy, refusing Indian overtures and cutting off all

154

communication channels with New Delhi. As the monarch crossed more than one Indian red line, a democratic regime became practically necessary.

*

On February 20, 1990, a day after the Royal Nepalese Army had opened fire and killed eleven protesters participating in a mass pro-democracy demonstration, an Indian Air Force jet flew into Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport. Out of it emerged General S. K. Sinha wearing a Gurkha *dhaka topi* on his head, ready to execute the mission India's Prime Minister V. P. Singh had entrusted onto him as the new ambassador to the kingdom: to convince King Birendra to listen to the people on the streets and embrace democracy.[361]

Over the following weeks, the retired Army official made extraordinary diplomatic efforts to walk a thin line – he had to preserve his access and influence over the increasingly besieged monarch and, at the same time, avoid the impression that India was siding with the old regime against the popular uprising.[362] But as violent protests kept escalating, patience in New Delhi quickly ran out, the Indian external affairs minister eventually noting that the Government of India "cannot be averse" and "cannot but feel committed" to the "peaceful" Nepalese "aim of reestablishing a multiparty democratic system under a constitutional monarchy".[363] The King would cling on to his absolute power for another six weeks, at the cost of dozens of lives and rising pressure from India until, on April 15th, he finally gave in by dismissing his cabinet, inviting the political

---

[361] Shreenivas K. Sinha, *A Soldier Recalls* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1992), 341.

[362] Gen. S. K. Sinha's privileged access allowed him to present credentials just two days after arriving, in the royal Winter palace, in Pokhara. He recalls repeated meetings seeking to "impress on [the] King the need to soon come to terms with the forces of democracy" and cautioning him that "an Army cannot fight its own people forever". On the other hand, Sinha kept secretly in touch with pro-democracy leaders. Sinha, *Soldier Recalls*, 357-8, 68.

[363] March 30, 1990 statement in parliament in Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 784-5.

parties to form an interim government, and accepting a limited royal role under a new constitution and multi-party democracy.

For almost thirty years, since the 1960 coup executed by his father, King Birendra's rule had proved relatively stable, even surviving a free referendum.[364] However, despite this apparent tranquility, Indo-Nepalese relations went through a period of acute conflict in the late 1980s, with New Delhi adopting an increasingly coercive posture, eventually enforcing an economic blockade on the landlocked kingdom, after refusing to renew separate trade and transit treaties.[365] By slashing Nepal's economic growth from a peak of 10% to little more than 1%, Indian involvement played a decisive role in fueling discontent against the King and the democratic regime change in the Spring of 1990.[366]

While one may therefore be tempted to infer that New Delhi's policy was, from the onset of the crisis, directed at achieving such liberalization of Nepalese politics, a closer examination indicates that regime change was an unintended – and in some conservative circles even undesired – effect of the initial bilateral dispute.[367] If not a preference for more democracy in Nepal, what then determined India's coercive posture towards Nepal in the late 1980s? Two related security assessments played a determinant role.

---

[364] After student protests in 1979, King Birendra held a referendum in 1980 at which the continuation of the *panchayat* system prevailed over multi-party democracy (55% to 45%).

[365] For a critical background on the blockade, and negotiations for the 1978 trade and transit treaty see Jagat S. Mehta, *Negotiating for India: resolving problems through diplomacy* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2006). Ch. XX

[366] 93% of Nepalese respondents in a survey classified India's role as "very important" or "important," Ramjee P. Parajulee, *The democratic transition in Nepal* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 210. In June 1990, Nepal's new PM Bhattarai paradoxically referred to his country's new democracy as a "negative benefit" which could not have been achieved without the Indian blockade: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 799.

[367] Based on the account of Ronen Sen, then a key advisor to PM R. Gandhi (Interview 081). One of King Birendra's advisers, Chiran Thapa, confirms: despite the crisis, the Indian government did not intend to dethrone the monarch. New Delhi has its priorities "clearly defined," concerned about China and that "things didn't go out of control." He underlines the role by two former Indian ambassadors to Nepal (H. C. Sarin and M. K. Rasgotra), who "constantly counselled restraint" (Interview 027).

Nepal's attempts to escape the Indian security umbrella

First, and most importantly, India's posture was driven by a negative assessment of King Birendra's strategy to diversify Nepal's security and economic linkages, especially with China, which were seen to threaten India's predominant influence.

While Indian concerns only manifested themselves openly after 1987, they had been privately expressed to Kathmandu much earlier: given its geographic situation bordering China, and in order to preserve its benefits from an open border and the "special relationship" instituted by the 1950 Indo-Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship, Nepal was to refrain from taking any decision potentially threatening Indian security – a vague condition that each side has variably interpreted and disputed since then.

Exploring this ambiguity and driven by a changed global context after taking over in 1975, King Birendra had embraced an increasingly assertive balancing strategy, starting with his proposal for a Nepal Zone of Peace (NZOP) – demilitarized and neutral between China and India.[368] Described in 1982 as Nepal's top foreign policy priority, and eagerly endorsed by Beijing, the initiative concerned New Delhi because Nepalese diplomats were vigorously pursuing it at multilateral settings despite Indian opposition.[369] But most importantly, its implementation would mean the "shifting of India's northern security line from [the] Indo-Tibetan to [the] Indo-Nepalese border, in the heart of Indian mainland … [and would therefore] accordingly demand the sealing of the Indo-Nepal border."[370]

---

[368] Initiative first forwarded by him in Feb. 1975, along with support for Sri Lanka's initiative for an Indian Ocean Zone of Peace, and Pakistan's initiative for a South Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

[369] In Feb. 1982, Nepal's PM S. B. Thapa describes the NZOP as "the top priority of our foreign policy." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 725. By 1988, 97 states supported the initiative, including China and all other South Asian states. For the causes behind India's opposition, see Muni, *India and Nepal*, 76-89.

[370] Muni, *India and Nepal*, 79.

Despite being aware of, and repeatedly warned about the security implications for India of the NZOP, and about its "equidistant" balancing strategy to transcend the India-China dynamic, Kathmandu persisted.[371] In the view of one of his main advisers, King Birendra did so because he interpreted several precedents as indicating rising Indian comfort with greater Nepalese autonomy and policy of diversification:

> *Nepal had to take advantage of [the new] maneuverability with the end of the Cold War and made possible with technology. [It was a] strategy to take advantage of globalization for Nepal's benefit to [the] maximum extent possible (…) There were other options, opportunities now that we felt didn't hurt India's fundamental interests of security.[372]*

Perceptions and feelings aside, by persisting in its pursuit for the NZOP and by seeking to rope in third countries such as the United States, Kathmandu's policy did indeed set off alarm bells in New Delhi.[373] Nepal was seen to be slipping away from under the Indian security umbrella, and two clashes after 1987 further reinforced this assessment.[374]

The first clash related to King Birendra's decision to order a consignment of Chinese military supplies, including anti-aircraft guns, without consulting India. After his successful state visit to China in September 1987, negotiations for the contract began in

---

[371] India first promises to study the NZOP closer, but after 1983 rejects it on grounds that it may erode the centrality of its bilateral treaty of 1950 and the "special relationship" it instituted by submitting Nepal's security to that of India: S. D. Muni, "Nepal as a Zone of Peace," *Strategic Analysis* 7, no. 10 (1984). Nepalese persistent attempts to convince New Delhi otherwise kept failing until 1989: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 754.

[372] C. Thapa (Interview 027), who refers to what Kathmandu interpreted as three "precedents": 1) After a special request by King Birendra to Saudi King Faizal, during the 1973 energy crisis, New Delhi had granted Nepal special transit rights to import Saudi oil; 2) India had cleared Soviet military assistance to Nepal via Calcutta, after 1978 Birendra's visit to Moscow, in 1978; and 3) After 1977, under PM M. Desai, India had reversed policy and agreed to Nepal's demand of separate trade and transit agreements.

[373] C. Thapa thus argues that, at the time, Nepal's priority was a "third country relationship, especially Japan, USA, European, and Arab countries," so as to transcend the India-China competition and further leverage its bargaining power: Birendra's "idea was to diversify policy as long as it did not affect Indian interests" (Interview 027). Serving at the U.S. Department of State, Howard Schaffer recalls: "much to Nepal's dismay, we (…) did not try to pressure India on its Nepal policy." (http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Schaffer,%20Howard%20B.toc.pdf pp. 118-190.

[374] India's deputy minister of external affairs, K. N. Singh, recalls Nepal's attempts to play off India against China, but "not really in a position to do it … it was almost funny because anyone [in Nepal] with anything in their head would know that in their position you can't do anything against India" (Interview 075).

March 1988, and the first batch arrived in June 1988.[375] Just a few weeks later, India's

deputy minister of External Affairs flew in secretly to Kathmandu to express Prime

Minister's Rajiv Gandhi's surprise and alarm at the development, which the King first

denied, and then tried to justify as not having any hostile intent.[376]

The root of the dispute lay in differing interpretations of the 1950 Treaty clause that

required Indian consent for Nepalese military imports through its territory: Kathmandu

argued for a narrow and literal reading, noting that the Chinese weapons had not been

delivered via India, while New Delhi argued for a wider reading and applicability under

the new geopolitical conditions of accessibility, noting that under the clause's original

"spirit" any Chinese military assets in Nepal would undermine Indian security.[377]

While it remains unclear why, over the next months Kathmandu refused to heed to New

Delhi's repeated warnings through a variety of official channels or cancel the two

remaining weapon installments.[378] Instead, besides persisting on its sovereignty and

legitimacy to import weapons from any country, the Nepalese took further steps of

---

[375] 500 trucks, arriving undercover and overnight, with US$20 million worth of NORINCO P-793 anti-aircraft guns and other weapons and equipment. In September, China reiterated its support for the NZOP and announced a major economic assistance package. See Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 152; Avtar S. Bhasin, *Nepal-India, Nepal-China relations: documents, 1947-2005 v. 5* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2005), 3194-5.

[376] K. N. Singh flew in on July 22 after PM R. Gandhi asked him to "go and have a look". He recalls his message: "You violated [the] 1950 Treaty, imported weapons from Russia without telling us, [and now] Chinese have been giving arms and you did not tell us, but we know the trucks are here – and for what do you need antiaircraft guns? If you want adversarial relation, that is up to you" (Interview 075).

[377] C. Thapa thus notes that anti-aircraft guns were a) imported directly from China, so not violating the 1950 Treaty per se; b) "defensive weapons" and of no concern to India; and c) required to prepare for an eventual insurgency (Interview 027). For a summary of the Nepalese position see also Subedi, *Dynamics of foreign policy and law: a study of Indo-Nepal relations*, 26. For a summary of the Indian interpretation, see Muni, *India and Nepal*, 47-9, 58-9. Six month after the India-Nepal Treaty was signed, Nehru noted that "even a child knows that one cannot go to Nepal without passing through India." Quoted in S. D. Muni, *Pangs of proximity: India and Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis* (New Delhi: Sage, 1993), 16.

[378] Nepal's Foreign Minister, for example, recalls that the issue was brought up repeatedly in meetings throughout 1988, including by Ambassador A. Deo (June), deputy minister K. N. Singh (July), and External Affairs Minister P. V. N. Rao (August), as well as by PM R. Gandhi in a meeting with Birendra (the King's response "did not satisfy the Indian Prime Minister"): Shailendra K. Upadhyay, *Tryst with diplomacy* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1991), 75-81.

rapprochement towards China, including a new intelligence sharing agreement in late 1988.[379] Beijing naturally jumped at the low-cost opportunity to rub salt into the deepening wounds of Indo-Nepalese relations, further aggravating Indian threat assessments.[380]

The second clash related to Nepal's policy of economic diversification and liberalization, seen as threatening India's special role in the Kingdom's developmental efforts. New Delhi perceived two measures to be of particular concern. First, starting in 1986, Kathmandu awarded a series of infrastructure projects to China and other countries in the lowland Terai, a region in which – given the open border – India saw any third-country presence as a potential security challenge and thus demanded a "first right of refusal."[381] Second, in 1987, Nepal enforced new labor legislation to stem immigration and restrict the rights of Indian workers, which New Delhi saw as a further violation of the 1950 Treaty and of the reciprocal benefits it accorded to millions of Nepalese citizens residing in India.[382]

[379] Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 151. Even as the crisis escalated, on Apr. 7, 1989, the King's chief spokesman and former PM R. S. Bista, dismissed Indian concerns: "arms procured from China are defensive in nature and limited in quantity; they cannot be said to pose even the smallest threat to India." Bista advocated rapprochement with China and visited Beijing in September: Avtar S. Bhasin, *Nepal-India, Nepal-China relations: documents, 1947-2005 v.3* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2005), 2190.

[380] Nov. 19-21, 1989, as trade blockade is in full swing, Chinese PM Li Peng visits Nepal, announces major grants, and emphasizes: "We consider it unjustified for a neighboring country of Nepal to impose a blockade against the Kingdom … [and hope] India will be more magnanimous and generous." Bhasin, *Nepal-India, Nepal-China relations: documents, 1947-2005 v. 5*, 3202-6.

[381] Nepal's Foreign Minister recalls this as an Indian demand on various upcoming infrastructure projects, especially in the Terai region, first articulated in Dec. 1986 by K. N. Singh, who expressed particular concern at these being allotted to Chinese companies. A compromise is reached on some issues: India agreed to rebuild a road on a grant, and Nepal withdrew contract for China to build energy distribution lines in a 25-30 km belt near the border with India: Upadhyay, *Tryst*, 43-64. C. Thapa notes that Nepal's policy was to abide by World Bank criteria and thus awarded contracts strictly to the lowest bidder, in this case China, which Indian officials opposed given "security interests." K. N. Singh recalls: "yes, they gave tenders to lowest bidder, China, but that went against the spirit of our friendship." (Interviews 027, 075).

[382] Apr. 1987: Nepal enforces stricter regulations for alien workers in Kathmandu, requiring Indians to have appropriate documentation to avoid deportation. The new immigration policy implemented most recommendations from the governmental Task Force on Internal and International Migration, created in

Both issues were compounded by the effects of Nepal's diversification strategy leading its more open economy to grow three times faster, at close to 10%, and India's share in the Kingdom's total trade to fall abruptly, from 96% to 29%, in just twenty years.[383] In New Delhi's view, Nepal was therefore not only freeriding on generous Indian trade and transit offers regulated by the 1978 bilateral agreements, but also pursuing a policy of "systematic discrimination" against Indian economic interests.[384]

On March 23, 1989, the existing trade and transit agreements between India and Nepal expired, New Delhi revoking all non-reciprocal benefits and imposing an unofficial embargo with a devastating impact.[385] From the onset, Nepalese officials knew that this measure was not the outcome of a mere technical conflict, but meant to retaliate and remind Nepal that, in exchange for the benefits of an open border and the "special relationship" institutionalized in 1950, it was precluded from taking any action impinging on India's security.[386] It could not have both, and India's unofficial embargo therefore hoped to either nudge or force King Birendra and his government to re-embrace the

---

1983, which had emphasized the need to reduce immigration from India, despite the 1950 Treaty: http://bipinadhikari.com.np/Archives/Articles/Reassessment_of_Harka_%20Gurung%20Report_19950 428.php

[383] From 1971 to 1991: Parajulee, *Democratic Transition*, 184. Nepal's FM on this policy in Apr. 1989: "It is in our interest to let interdependence grow." http://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/11/world/nepal-s-economy-is-gasping-as-india-a-huge-neighbor-squeezes-it-hard.html

[384] Apr. 26, 1989, India's EAM P. V. N. Rao, who says 1950 Treaty now "eroded," because "not only are Indians as individuals discriminated against but Indian firms, having won contracts against international bidding, have been deprived of what is due to them through maneuvers in favour of third countries." He also contests Nepal's decision to withdraw tariff/customs benefits, leading to a 50% fall in Indian exports: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 758-60, 67.

[385] Nepal was not a GATT member, nor India a signatory to the International Convention on Transit Trade of Landlocked Countries. Nepal's economic growth fell from 10% to 2%. An MEA spokesperson explained the measure as a response to Nepal's policy of "changing trade patterns" Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.3*, 2187 fn1. For Indian reaction see also pp. 2172-2256.

[386] Nepal's FM recognizes that already in March, 1988, "it was clear that India was not interested in any talk [on trade] before the security issue was taken up" Upadhyay, *Tryst*, 91, 94. Also, royal adviser C. Thapa: trade was "not the major issue, more than anything else, we knew it [crisis] was motivated by Chinese weapons" and "other security issues." (Interview 027).

wider "spirit" of the 1950 Treaty: Nepal would be better off curtailing some of its autonomy in exchange for a friendly India than by persisting on its quest for independence through strategic diversification, especially via China.[387]

Even the most critical Indian voices against the economic blockade acknowledged that New Delhi was thus left with little option but to coercively counter Nepal's moves.[388] The warnings had become increasingly explicit, Nepal's Foreign Minister for example recalling India's Foreign Secretary, K. P. S. Menon's veiled threat, in late 1988, that Nepal was "systematically undermining these [India-Nepal] special ties based on trust" and that while "India does not believe in the 'buffer state' theory … if Nepal keeps up this trend in its policy we [Indians] believe that Nepal's future will be insecure."[389]

The security factor in India's assessments was so predominant that it even survived a change in government, in December of 1989. The new Prime Minister, V. P. Singh, had openly criticized his predecessor's approach during the electoral campaign, and accordingly one of his first foreign policy initiatives was to start a bilateral dialogue, normalize relations, and end the blockade as soon as possible.[390] However, just three months later, in March 1990 and at the peak of the crisis in Kathmandu, his government

[387] K. N. Singh attributes the "nosedive in relations" to Nepal "badmouthing India and ineptly playing the China card". PM R. Gandhi had had enough of "imaginary grievances of the Nepali establishment." K. Natwar Singh, *Walking with lions: tales from a diplomatic past* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2013), 121. On India using the trade embargo to signal concern about the "long-term security implications" of Nepal's diversification strategy, see Muni, *India and Nepal*, 47-9.

[388] J. Mehta, for example, notes that Nepal's diversification strategy "predictably invited adverse reactions from India." In particular, playing the China card was "a mistake" and "a provocative statement risking revulsion in India and insignificant security gains for Nepal" Mehta, *Rescuing*, 230.

[389] In a meeting in New Delhi, on Dec. 6 1988, quoted by Nepal's FM: Upadhyay, *Tryst*, 80-81.

[390] Nepal welcomed V. P. Singh's outreach attempts and, in an apparent quid pro quo, awarded an important road reconstruction project to India on Dec. 13. Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 778-9; MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1989," (New Delhi 1990), 326. Normalization attempts include three rounds of technical dialogue in New Delhi (Jan. and Feb.) and in Kathmandu (April). Nepal's FM, however, recalls this was fruitless because of the deeper issues involved: "[the] question of security dimension of India is such that no party in India can ignore [it] and this was [remained in early 1990] … the main problem between our relationship." Upadhyay, *Tryst*, 103.

would propose a draft agreement to update and expand the mutual security clauses of the 1950 Treaty which reflected India's perennial security concerns – including clauses which royalist Nepal rejected immediately as an insult, on grounds of eroding its independence.[391] In stark contrast, just two months later, after the regime change, Nepal's new democratic caretaker government promised to cooperate with the Indian government to address all its security concerns.[392]

His Majesty's Himalayan radio silence

Nepalese and Indian strategies had clashed numerous times before, but the crisis in the late 1980s spiraled into open conflict and an irreversible situation favoring regime change because of a second Indian assessment: King Birendra cut key channels of communication and rejected New Delhi's overtures to negotiate, even as the pro-democracy parties on the streets gained track as a credible alternative.

Several theories have been forwarded for King Birendra's lack of responsiveness after 1987, including his progressive isolation, the conservative profile of his advisers and his cabinet, and his underestimation of India's hostile response paired with an overestimation of Chinese willingness to support him.[393] Whatever the cause, His Majesty's silence

---

[391] Discussed at bilateral dialogue in Kathmandu, March 30-April 1, possibly presented by Indian Foreign Secretary S. K. Singh, it reportedly included a clause that Nepal's future defence acquisitions required "prior consultation" from India. [XX: draft in Bhasin; v1 1994]. See also Subedi, *Dynamics of foreign policy and law: a study of Indo-Nepal relations*, 50.

[392] June 10, India-Nepal joint statement: "prior consultations with a view to reaching mutual agreement on such defence-related matters which, in the view of either country, could pose a threat to its security." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 799.

[393] For a summary of these theories, see T. Louise Brown, *The challenge to democracy in Nepal: a political history* (London: Routledge, 1996), 114-42. K. N. Singh emphasizes that the King was isolated, opposed to change and accommodation, "badly" influenced by his wife Queen Aishwarya and a circle of "third rate courtier advisers" which led the cabinet and other government officials to embrace anti-Indianism as "proof of royal allegiance" (Interview 075).

caused alarm because it was precisely during periods of bilateral tension that New Delhi most expected channels of communication to remain open.

Throughout 1988, as the bilateral conflict flared up, New Delhi had therefore pursued a gradual policy of engagement, secretly reaching out to King Birendra through a variety of channels to express concern, draw red lines, and also hint at possible repercussions – K. N. Singh's July 1988 being the best example of such attempts.[394] At the same time, India also offered a variety of inducements, including its availability to consider a revision of the 1950 Treaty, which were not taken up by Kathmandu.[395] King Birendra, however, kept sending "mixed" signals, and the last drop came in late December 1988, when he did not show up at an informal breakfast meeting that PM R. Gandhi had conveyed for several of his counterparts at the sidelines of a regional summit.[396]

Ambassador Ronen Sen, then serving as PM R. Gandhi's national security adviser, recalls that India was initially "willing to give the benefit of doubt, but to face repeatedly such incidents was curious and threw up questions in New Delhi about the King's bona fide intentions."[397] Indeed, despite the protocol incident and an escalating trade crisis,

---

[394] During his July 1988 visit as PM R. Gandhi's special envoy, K. N. Singh meets the monarch privately to candidly list India's various grievances and Nepalese actions going "against the letter and spirit" of the 1950 Treaty. He pointedly asks: "[do] you intend to restructure or remold our bilateral relations?" And he warns: "India could live without the Treaty. [But] could Nepal? … As your friend, we're telling you about [possible] consequences. Beyond a point, you will have to give up your strategy." Despite specific threats, including about the King's brother (Gyanendra), Singh recalls that thereafter "His Majesty dragged his royal feet. He prevaricated" (Interview 075) and Singh, *Walking*, 123.

[395] According to R. Sen, an offer conveyed repeatedly without success (Interview 081). Upadhyay, *Tryst*, 82.

[396] SAARC summit in Islamabad, Dec. 29-31. PM R. Gandhi interpreted this as an "insult" according to R. Bhandari: http://www.rediff.com/news/2001/jun/11inter.htm. King Birendra's adviser C. Thapa attributes it to a "protocol misunderstanding" (INT027) and R. Sen says that after being given an explanation, India was willing to give the monarch the benefit of the doubt (INT081).

[397] Ronen Sen recalls PM R. Gandhi's "deep disappointment at the manner" in which Nepal was proceeding, catching India by surprise, and refers to the counterfactual precedent of Bhutan voting in 1986 against India at the UN on a Pakistani proposal, but having informed India beforehand, and thus "more acceptable because we were not caught by surprise." (INT081). Royal adviser C. Thapa confirms: India

India kept a variety of bilateral dialogues running throughout 1989, seeking to return the bilateral relationship to normalcy.[398] But Kathmandu remained defiant, delaying Indian offers of negotiation, refusing to define its demands, and the King's chief spokesperson accusing the Indian government of "carrying out a campaign of malicious and slanderous propaganda against the institution of monarchy, the people and other institutions and [the] political system of Nepal."[399]

As tensions escalated even further and Indian parliamentary elections approached in late 1989, PM R. Gandhi was keen to solve the issue and reached out personally to King Birendra at the sidelines of a Non-Aligned Movement summit, which resulted in an agreement to pursue normalization through a secret channel established between two of their most trusted advisers.[400] But when even this attempt collapsed after only a few weeks, following the monarch's unexpected refusal to meet the Indian special envoy or to even consider his non-paper proposals to return to the "status quo ante," New Delhi was

was "very upset" when finding out that Chinese weapons had been purchased, despite King Birendra's initial assurances that they had been a "gift." (INT027).

[398] Despite the crisis, dialogue went on in 1989 as promised by PM R. Gandhi: dialogues are held between Water Resources Secretaries (March), Home Secretaries, Directors General of Civil Aviation, and Railway Authorities (May), Surveyors General, Defence and Foreign Secretaries (June), and the Joint Commission (July). External Affairs Minister N. Rao visited Kathmandu in August for a final attempt to normalize relations. MEA, "Annual Report 1989-90," (New Delhi 1990).

[399] Quoted in Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.3*, 2236. Further signals interpreted in New Delhi as hostile: Nepal kept insisting on the NZOP, internationalized the bilateral trade dispute at the UN and Non-Aligned Movement, and pro-government legislators opposed the Indian Army's deployment of Gurkha soldiers to Sri Lanka: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 770-4.

[400] Meeting held Sept. 4-6 in Belgrade, at the sidelines of the NAM summit. Ronen Sen recalls PM R. Gandhi'a outreach to King Birendra and their agreement to start a secret and candid exchange of their mutual concerns via two of their advisers (himself and C. Thapa). The first round of consultations is held in Delhi (INT081). Thapa, recalls "good talks" in Belgrade, and Birendra favorable to Gandhi's suggestion because in his view the crisis did not reflect any substantive disagreement, but had arisen from a "lack of communication". He illustrates: "when [before this meeting] we tried to get them [India] to specify how we could get more trust, then they would always put the ball in our court and ask us what we wanted. This is problematic, because you can't ask for trust without substance, specifics." On the first meeting with Ronen Sen, Thapa recalls a "frank discussion of problems and possible solutions." (INT027)

left both puzzled and concerned.[401] As a final attempt to reach out to King Birendra also failed, India began seeing Nepal's royal regime transformed as an obstacle, refusing to participate in any conflict resolution mechanism.[402]

The King's resolute silence – from the secluded comfort of his Winter palace in Pokhara – contrasted with the noise from the rapidly shifting situation on the ground in Springtime Kathmandu, as the political parties formed an unprecedentedly broad alliance with the Communist parties and took to the streets in a mass movement to demand democratization.[403]

*

King Birendra's strategy in the 1980s to reduce dependence on India by reaching out to China and other countries to diversify its security and economic relations, was at the root of an escalating bilateral crisis with India, which saw this as a Nepalese attempt to escape its security umbrella. The monarch's persistent refusal to engage New Delhi in any

---

[401] After the first meeting in New Delhi, Ronen Sen recalls flying in secretly to Kathmandu with a non-paper that a) candidly listed Indian concerns; b) implicitly admitted to Indian shortcomings and capacity to deliver more; c) invited Nepal to "look beyond the legalistic dimension" of the 1950 Treaty; and d) expressed India's availability to meet halfway and "go beyond the spirit of the [1950] understanding." Sen underlines that suggestions were "not sacrosanct," and while referring to the possibility of a Treaty revision in "strong" and "candid" terms, the non-paper did not include a draft proposal in order "not to interfere with due process." To India's surprise, however, King Birendra did not grant Sen a meeting, which was "very unusual" given the precedent of his previous missions as the PM's special envoy to other heads of state or government. Sen says that R. Gandhi was thus "puzzled" at this "sudden offensive stance" after their personal investment in normalization (INT081). C. Thapa confirms Sen's account and recalls the non-paper as lining out "reasonable" and "perfectly acceptable" steps "to return to the status quo ante." On Birendra's lack of response ("a big mistake … if we had accepted the Indian proposal, none of the [regime] changes would have happened"), he offers three theories: a) Domestic opposition to normalization with India, in particular by Foreign Secretary N. B. Shah and PM M. M. Singh Shrestha; b) Assessment that India had already shifted policy objectives to achieve a democratic regime change, thus making any normalization attempt useless; and c) Decision to wait for outcome of elections in India, expecting pro-democracy protests in Nepal to "fizzle out" thereafter. (INT027)

[402] R. Sen recalls these attempts: 1) PM R. Gandhi and his wife invited Crown Prince Dipendra for a private lunch in New Delhi, to pass on a message to his father; 2) Attempts to reach out via Indian officials who were trusted friends of the monarch, including Dinesh Singh, M. R. Scindia and Abid Hussein. (INT081)

[403] Under the leadership of G. M. Singh, the Nepali Congress launched a nation-wide protest movement (Movement for Restoration of Democracy) on Jan. 18, later on joined by several Communist parties.

conflict resolution mechanism to normalize the bilateral relationship eventually lead to a total breakdown in communication between both governments. New Delhi's assessment thus shifted accordingly, as pro-democracy protests gained track: by 1989, a regime change in Kathmandu was not only probable, but also increasingly desirable for India's twin interests of achieving order and security in Nepal. Rather than determined by a moral proclivity to support to democratization, or a hegemonic reflex to destabilize a small neighbor, India's coercive posture in 1990 was the outcome of a strategic assessment about how regime change in Nepal became indispensable to India's security interests and influence in the Himalayan kingdom.

3. Sri Lanka 1987

> *[Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict threatened a] ripple effect on our polity and disintegrate us (…) [Indian involvement was therefore] an external projection of our influence to tell our neighbours that if, because of your compulsions or aberrations, you pose a threat to us, we are capable of, or we have a political will to project ourselves within your territorial jurisdiction for the limited purpose of bringing you back. … It is not arrogant. It is realpolitik.[404]*

> J. N Dixit, as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka (1989)

In July 1987, India initiated its boldest experiment in liberal intervention in a Sri Lanka torn by an embryonic civil war. While formally based on a bilateral agreement, New Delhi deployed military force to compel Colombo into implementing an ambitious roadmap of constitutional reforms for conflict resolution. India's coercive posture was rooted in three strategic assessments: 1) The Sri Lankan regime's structural ethno-nationalism and exclusive focus on a military solution to defeat insurgents, which

---

[404] March 10, 1989, at the United Services Institution, in New Delhi: Avtar S. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka relations and Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict: documents, 1947-2000 v.3* (New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001), 2349-50.

threatened to prolong and escalate the conflict; 2) Colombo's attempts at extra-regional balancing to counter India, which threatened to internationalize the conflict and affect India's leverage and regional security predominance; and 3) the conflict's spillover effect, which threatened to affect domestic security in India's border region of Tamil Nadu.

<div align="center">*</div>

At 16:47 on June 4, 1987, Indian Air Force (IAF) Grp. Cpt. B. K. Sunder's attempt to contact the Sri Lankan Air Traffic Control in Colombo was greeted with ominous silence. Escorted by four Mirage 2000 fighter jets, he proceeded to execute Eagle Mission 4, or *Poomalai* (Garland), by lowering his AN-32 transport plane to about 1,500 feet and violate the island's sovereign air space. A few minutes later, his and four other AN-32s dropped 23 tones of humanitarian relief on to the city of Jaffna, where Tamil insurgents resisted a Sri Lankan Army offensive.[405] Looking up to see the nine Indian planes conclude the airdrop with a provocative fly-by just after having been ordered by the Sri Lankan president to end his counter-insurgency offensive, Army Commander Cyril Ranatunga promised to himself: "I will never forget and will not forgive India to my dying day."[406]

Later that day the Sri Lankan government formally expressed "outrage" at the mission as an "unwarranted assault on our sovereignty and territorial integrity".[407] But President Julius R. Jayewardene perfectly understood the mission's implied message: New Delhi

---

[405] http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/history/1987ipkf/1022-chapter01.html

[406] Cyril Ranatunga, *Adventurous journey from peace to war, insurgency to terrorism* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2009), 143. India had attempted a naval relief operation the day before, but its 20 vessels were intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy. The Sri Lankan government was given only an hour's notice about the airdrop: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1904-13; J. N. Dixit, *Assignment Colombo* (Delhi: Konark, 1998), 94-106.

[407] Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1917-19. Colombo instructed Sri Lankan Permanent Representative at the UN to raise the issue at the UNSC. India's PR, C. Garekhan, recalls dissuading him: "it is your right to raise issue [but] no adoption of resolution possible, it was anyway not such a big deal, basically a humanitarian intervention in fashionable language." [INT 034]

had moved into a coercive mode, ready to take any action necessary to pursue a political solution to the island's ethnic conflict, and he was expected to cooperate.[408]

And so he did: less than two months later, on July 29, Jayewardene hosted PM R. Gandhi in Colombo to sign the "Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka," creating an Indian military mission to enforce a cease-fire, disarm the Tamil insurgents, and assist in the implementation of constitutional amendments which amounted to a regime change.[409] Less than a week later, the Indian Army had already deployed 3,000 men as part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), which would grow to a peak deployment of four divisions and almost 100,000 men.[410]

India's coercive posture in 1987 was the final step to an escalating involvement that had begun four years earlier, after Sri Lanka's 1983 "Black July" race riots that took the lives of thousands of minority Tamils, and rendered around 100,000 refugees.[411] This further encouraged the radicalization of the Tamil minority, which had started to embrace insurgency and secession in the 1970s.[412] It thus became increasingly difficult for India to

---

[408] Indian outreach thereafter: June 12, through a letter by *The Hindu* editor N. Ram to Sri Lankan Minister G. Dissanayake outlining a first set of proposals and suggesting India as a mediator, "obviously with Rajiv Gandhi's concurrence" De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 633. June 15: bilateral agreement on supply relief supplies. Late June: first Indian Army units put on alert for deployment. June 30: Sri Lanka's FM A. C. S. Hameed acknowledges: "this ethnic conflict cannot be resolved without India's participation." By July, backchannel negotiations and drafts exchanged: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1920-32; Dixit, *Assignment*, 119-77; De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 534-5, 636.

[409] PM R. Gandhi dismissed charges of interference: India's involvement "in response to a specific and formal request of the Government of Sri Lanka … Your President asked for our cooperation in his effort to restore trust and peace." MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1987," (New Delhi 1988), 257-8.

[410] Avtar S. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka relations and Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict: documents, 1947-2000 v.4* (New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001), 1981; Avtar S. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka relations and Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict: documents, 1947-2000 v.5* (New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001), 2444.

[411] Speaking on Aug. 15, 1983, on government's alleged connivance in the riots, S. Thondaman, a cabinet minister form the [Tamil] Ceylon Workers Congress: "there is substantial evidence to believe that the events [were] ….not a sudden and spontaneous outbreak [but] a concerted attempt … by means of a carefully laid out plan over a long period of time." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1097.

[412] Tamil militancy rose in the 1970s to replace the moderate Federal Party, and establish a violent quest for secession after the Tamil United Liberation Front adopted the Vaddukoddai Resolution on May 14, 1976.

stand by as the neighboring country slid into civil war, clashing with its ideal objective of a united, stable, and peaceful Sri Lanka.[413] For four years thereafter, New Delhi trialed different, and often also contradictory policies to nudge all sides towards conflict resolution – it armed and detained Tamil insurgents, appointed and withdrew special envoys, mediated and interrupted negotiations, and even micro-managed constitutional discussions.[414]

Beyond narratives about alleged benign altruism, hegemonic intent, or personal animosity, what led India in 1987 to abandon the offshore approach of "leading from behind" and embrace a full-blown coercive involvement with "boots on the ground"?[415] While liberal concerns played a foundational role in defining India's approach to the conflict (and are examined in detail in Part II of the dissertation), the shift was driven by three strategic assessments.

---

[413] M. K. Narayanan who was in charge of the Tamil issue at the Intelligence Bureau in the early 1980s, defines the Indian policy dilemma: "We didn't want *Eelam* [separate Tamil state]. … We didn't want a hostile Sri Lanka. We didn't want hostile Tamil groups in Sri Lanka. We didn't want a hostile MGR [Chief Minister of India's Tamil border state]. … Several concentric policy circles of priorities but at the axiomatic core we wanted a united SL." [INT077]. The Indian High Commissioner J. N. Dixit offered the most comprehensive summary of the rationale and objectives of Indian involvement in a March 10, 1989 speech in New Delhi: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 2347-50.

[414] FS M. K. Rasgotra recalls the dilemmas of involvement after 1983: "we exercised restraint, because whenever we go in to try to solve their problems, it always rebounded on us." (Interview 040).

[415] For example, according to Sri Lankan Army Commander at the time: "The Indian government, with the furtive idea of gaining hegemony, directly and indirectly supported the destabilization process [of SL after July 83]," Ranatunga, *Adventurous journey*, 101-2. For versions underlining Indira Gandhi's personal animosity towards J. Jayewardene, or Indian hegemonic intent, deep state interests, and post-colonial insecurities, see Sumantra Bose, *States, nations, sovereignty: Sri Lanka, India, and the Tamil Eelam Movement* (New Delhi: Sage, 1994), 130-74; Sankaran Krishna, *Postcolonial insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the question of nationhood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

Colombo's non-cooperation, from reluctance to resistance

> *[After 1983, Sri Lanka] seemed more inclined to test, or probe the limits of Indian tolerance, than in finding a lasting solution to the ethnic muddle [by] using India's good offices.[416]*

> M. K. Narayanan, Director of Intelligence Bureau 1987-89

Of greatest influence was India's assessment that President J. R. Jayewardene was not committed to finding a negotiated solution, moving from reluctance to resistance against Indian mediation, even while continuing to seek a military victory over the insurgents. While profoundly disturbed by the 1983 riots, Indian PM Indira Gandhi had initially dismissed suggestions – and extraordinary domestic pressure – for a military intervention in Sri Lanka.[417] Instead, she persuaded Jayewardene to let India play a mediatory role.[418]

This was the first act to a cycle that would repeat itself annually for the next four years (1983-87), with almost ritual regularity: after every bilateral crisis, ethnic riot, or peak in violence (normally May-July), Jayewardene would back down under Indian pressure and commit to a new phase of negotiations with Tamil parties or insurgents (August-November), only to abruptly opt out and go on the offensive through political, economic or military means (December-April), which then lead to a new spiral of violence and conflict with India.

---

[416] M. K. Narayanan, "Role of Intelligence and Security Agencies," in *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons* ed. Rupesinghe Kumar (Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006), 120-1.

[417] Her first reaction, on July 23, 1983: "This is an internal problem of Sri Lanka. India does not wish to, nor does it, interfere in the domestic affairs of another country" Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1467-8. See also pp. 1468-1557 for demands in parliament for a military intervention, which P. Ramachandran says was considered by PM I. Gandhi, in a meeting with him and Defence Minister R. Venkataraman, "inspired by Grenada" (Interview 031). FS M. K. Rasgotra recalls asking the Indian PM in Nov. 1983: "if he's not the guy that will bend a little, and sort out the domestic situation [in Sri Lanka], should we not consider throwing him out?" a suggestion she brushes off: "we will deal with whomever is in power." (Interview 040).

[418] Aug. 12, 1983: Pressured by PM I. Gandhi, Jayewardene sends his brother H. W. Jayewardene to New Delhi to assure her about his commitment to solve the conflict and to share his proposals. She responds: "these [proposals] may not meet the [Tamil] aspirations," but her offer of "good offices" is accepted and G. Parthasarathy is appointed special envoy on Aug. 18. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1540.

In 1983, negotiations began under Indian auspices after the "Black July" riots, but quickly collapsed as the Sri Lankan government imposed a naval blockade and pressed on a military offensive in early 1984.[419] The All Party Conference reconvened again in August, only to be called off by Jayewardene in December despite Indian pressure, leading to a new bilateral standoff in mid-1985.[420] In July and August 1985, India facilitated talks between the Sri Lankan government and various Tamil organizations in Bhutan, leading to an exchange of proposals which Jayewardene finally deems "totally unacceptable" in January, 1986.[421] Finally, the cycle repeated one last time, as India developed the most detailed set of proposals in May, 1986, which it forwarded to all sides over the next months. They were then rejected by Jayewardene in December, after which he gave his armed forces green light to impose a blockade on the North and go on the offensive against the insurgents in early 1987.[422]

---

[419] Jayewardene accepts India's good offices and began a new round of talks with the All Party Conference (APC), which faltered in October after he refused to include the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the only significant non-insurgent Tamil organization. In Dec. 1983, he pitched for a limited set of reforms under "Annexure B" instead of the more substantive "Annexure C" proposals favored by India. Ignoring Indian advice, he postponed the APC in March 1984, after which violence escalated again. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 139; Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1563, 99.

[420] The APC is called off in December. Feb. 1985: PM R. Gandhi hosted Sri Lankan envoy Athulathmudali, in an effort to restart dialogue and invited President Jayewardene to visit India, but he prefers to stall in order to "bide time," and visits Pakistan instead, where he makes a provocative statement on Kashmir: De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 607-8; Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1661.

[421] After a letter from PM R. Gandhi in May lamenting the lack in progress, Jayewardene visited New Delhi in June, leading to cease-fire agreement and two rounds of secret talks between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil insurgents facilitated by India, in July and August, in Bhutan. After India finally succeeded to coax the insurgents to submit their proposals, Jayewardene rejected them in Jan. 1986, leading to the end of cease-fire and India cancelling its good offices. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1172, 262-3, 65-67, 678-9; MEA, "FAR 1985," 190; De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 610-11.

[422] An Indian delegation led by P. Chidambaram and K. N. Singh developed a detailed set of proposals, which lead to substantive discussions between the Sri Lankan government and the TULF (37 meetings held in July and August) and also with insurgent groups. Presented on Dec. 17, the proposals are rejected just two days later by Jayewardene. In Jan. 1987 he announces an economic blockade on Jaffna, followed in March by aerial bombing, and the military offensive in May that provoked the Indian relief mission on June 4. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1306-48, 781, 793, 796-824, 848; Dixit, *Assignment*, 51-2; De Silva, *Regional powers*, 176-86, 201-20.

In the Indian view after 1985, these cycles indicated a deliberate Sri Lankan strategy to delay any meaningful peace process, and this non-cooperative intent was becoming increasingly clear through a variety of tactical steps by Jayewardene. First, in 1983, he banned the moderate TULF from parliament, which decreased the probability of a negotiated understanding, but then, after 1985, deceptively engaged the party again despite knowing that it had been sidelined by the insurgent organizations.[423]

Second, he would refuse to take the initiative on negotiations, constantly putting the onus on India (or the insurgents) to begin or move them forward – and whenever participating, he would publically profess to do so reluctantly, under pressure from New Delhi, and by submitting proposals that were bound to be rejected.[424] Sri Lankan diplomatic and intelligence briefs to Jayewardene also indicate that he was well informed about India's concerns and the pros and cons of negotiating with Tamil parties and insurgents, which further suggested his unwillingness to cooperate with the Indian-led peace process.[425]

---

[423] The sixth amendment was passed on Aug. 8, 1983, barring all 18 TULF representatives from parliament as they refused to take an oath to defend the country's territorial integrity: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1562. J. Dhanapala, at the time posted at the Sri Lankan High Commission in New Delhi, notes that while in the first few days after the riots India was ready to give Colombo the benefit of doubt, accepting explanations blaming individual cabinet members like Cyril Matthew, Jayewardene subsequently "did not play his cards well" because by passing the 6th amendment and by refusing to host a public inquiry, he gave out wring signals to India (Interview 073). V. Anandasangeree, a senior TULF member at the time notes how Jayewardene used the TULF after 1985 as a main interlocutor in "utterly useless talks, to bide his time," despite knowing they had been sidelined, and not allowing them to consult with the LTTE (Interview 002).

[424] He would repeatedly refer to "Indian proposals" to which the Indian EAM responds, in 1984: India "has no proposals, cannot have any proposals. We can only make use of our good offices" Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1578-83. One of India's most senior intelligence officers dealing with the Tamil insurgents, and present at the talks in Bhutan, notes that the composition and proposals of Sri Lanka's government delegation were conservative, showing no initiative or commitment, which sent a wrong signal: S. Chandrasekharan, "The Timphu Talks: an Opportunity Missed?," in *Sri Lankan Crisis and India's Response*, ed. V. Suryanarayan (New Delhi: Patriot, 1991), 86-7. Dixit referred to the talks as "the dialogue of the deaf." Dixit, *Assignment*, 44.

[425] In June 1984, Foreign Minister Hameed warns him that India saw his peace initiative as "a device to buy time to permit a solution along exclusively Sinhala lines." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 143.

Third, Jayewardene took open pride in exploring organizational and personal differences within the Indian government to his own advantage, playing off different leaders, mediators and government organizations against one another and thus delaying negotiations.[426]

Fourth, after Indira Gandhi's assassination, in October 1984, the Sri Lankan President made a fatal underestimation, expecting Rajiv Gandhi to terminate Indian involvement and back off – when exactly the opposite happened.[427]

Fifth, his public statements about India as a threat and comparing the Sri Lankan conflict to the Indian conflicts in Punjab and Kashmir, only confirmed New Delhi's assessment that he was not amenable to embrace the political pillar of India's prescribed dual counter-insurgency strategy.[428]

Finally, despite justifying his reluctant cooperation and occasional anti-India rhetoric with the need to appease Sinhala pressure groups domestically, including his own Prime Minister R. Premadasa, President J. R. Jayewardene was firmly in control: he had been

---

[426] K. N. Singh recalls him boasting in 1987 "I'm the Sunil Gavaskar [famous Indian cricket batsman] of Sri Lanka: you have sent six bowlers [envoys], and they're all out, so who's next?" (Interview 075). Foreign Secretary M. K. Rasgotra describes G. Parthasarathy as his "first victim," in 1983: "GP was supposed to seduce Jayewardene, but ended up seduced, trusting he would accept our Annexure C proposals." (Interview 040, see also Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1565-69.) P. Chidambaram recalls how "old fox" Jayewardene promised to implement a new set of proposals worked out by India in 1986, only to reject them just two days after they were announced: "he was shrewd and played his smart game … [he] got Rajiv [Gandhi] convinced that he was a great friend of India, played him well" (Interview 036).

[427] According to his semi-official biography, Jayewardene "believed, at this stage [late 1984], that Rajiv Gandhi was more likely to follow the [less interventionist] example of his grandfather [Nehru] than his imperious mother [Indira Gandhi]" which may explain why he chose to "bide time" instead of accepting an invitation to visit India for talks: De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 592, 607-8. C. Gharekhan recalls this as a fatal underestimation: "After 1983 [riots], to put it mildly, India was [had been] tolerant" and while R. Gandhi "continued the mantra that we will not support secession, [after 1984] he pursued a more assertive policy" (Interview 034).

[428] Nov. 3, after attending her funeral: "In India, some Sikhs are agitating for a separate State, Khalistan. In Sri Lanka some Tamils are doing the same, seeking to establish "Eelam". (…) In India, a few enraged Hindus massacred innocent Sikhs. In Sri Lanka a few enraged Sinhalese massacred innocent Tamils". R. Gandhi replied saying issues were "not comparable," but he repeated the comparison on Apr. 18 in an interview to *Radio Australia*, further incensing Indian officials. Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1284-5, 633-5.

elected in 1982 for a six year-long mandate, and the 1977 legislative elections had given his party a parliamentary super-majority that allowed him to adopt a new constitution and then amend it at will to hold on to power.[429] All this reinforced earlier Indian assessments that Sinhala ethno-nationalism and resistance to address Tamil grievances were deeply rooted across all Sri Lankan parties: paradoxically, despite being largely non-cooperative, President Jayewardene was thus the best possible partner and his tactics were received with continued, albeit diminishing Indian tolerance.[430]

The tipping point was reached in early 1987, when it became clear that Jayewardene's public commitments to a military solution were not only meant to appease domestic hardliners, but rooted in a firm belief in force to end the ethnic conflict: "[The] Tamil problem is more a military problem and any military problem has to be tackled militarily."[431] More importantly, Sri Lanka was investing massively in modernizing its Armed Forces, leading the share of its defense expenditure to skyrocket from 3.8% in 1980 to 16.8% in 1987.[432] Jayewardene had entrusted this mission to Gen. Cyril Ranatunga, whom he recalled into active service to establish a new Joint Operations Command and execute an aggressive defense diplomacy to procure military supplies and training abroad.[433]

---

[429] Sept. 1978: New constitution promulgated with a presidential system. Aug. 1982: Third amendment passed, allowing Presidential re-election. Dec. 1982: He wins a constitutionally dubious referendum to extend the Parliament's mandate by another 6 years.

[430] According to a former Indian high commissioner to Colombo: "the ruling elite of Ceylon, whether it be the UNP or the SLFP, has since independence thought it expedient to play on the Singhala-Buddhist ethos of the island, thereby alienating the Tamil element of the population." Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 149.

[431] From a Dec. 1985 statement: "…it is not difficult to handle Jaffna. We can cut off food and supplies to the peninsula and flush out terrorists in a month's time." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1233-36. Also, in May 1, 1986: "military solution was the answer to a military question" Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, cxii.

[432] K. M. De Silva, "The Police and Armed Services," in *Sri Lanka: Problems of Governance*, ed. K. M. De Silva (New Delhi: Konark, 1993), 365.

[433] Ranatunga, *Adventurous journey*, 109-24.

In 1986, these assessments drove India's accusations of duplicity, as expressed by the Minister of External Affairs before parliament: "professing that they [Sri Lankan government] want a political solution, they [are] in their hearts, or in actual fact, opting for a military solution."[434] When, in January 1987, Jayewardene ordered an economic blockade followed by aerial bombardments on the North, R. Gandhi made one last appeal, repeating India's mantra since 1984:

> *We know that no ethnic problem such as this [in Sri Lanka] has a military solution [because] military solutions are only temporary solutions. They do not solve the problem. They only suppress the problem and, if there is to be a solution, it must be a negotiated solution.[435]*

On top of such warnings, India explicitly refused to entertain Jayewardene's last-minute appeals to support a military operation, based on Colombo's belief that it was about to clinch a historic victory over the insurgents. [436] Despite being could shouldered and warned, in late May the Sri Lankan president reassuringly ordered his Army to execute *Operation Liberation*: "You can flatten Jaffna if this [insurgent] menace can be eradicated and I will build a new Jaffna."[437]

This was the final confirmation of Indian assessments, as expressed by PM R. Gandhi two days later, when he announced that the "Sri Lankan Government was [had been] buying time for pursuing the military option … [committing a] massacre of unarmed noncombatant civilians." [438] A red line had been crossed, leading to his decision to

---

[434] Speaking to parliament on Feb. 27, 1986: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1719.

[435] March 4, in parliament: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1844. For similar warnings by various Indian ministers since 1984 see MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1984," (New Delhi 1985), 275; MEA, "FAR 1985," 98, 114-15; MEA, "FAR 1987," 90-91, 160.

[436] For R. Gandhi's refusal, see Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1874.

[437] Quoted in Ranatunga, *Adventurous journey*, 132. See also De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 630.

[438] Quoted in MEA, "FAR 1987," 189-90. According to K. N. Singh, R. Gandhi ordered the June 4 operation because "Sri Lanka's defiance of India's mediatory efforts, which it had used as a convenience, should be neutralized." Dixit, *Assignment*, 106-7.

authorize the Indian Air Force humanitarian relief operation, on June 4, and thus coerce Colombo to end the Sri Lankan Army offensive and accept an Indian intervention.

"Yankee Dick" balances India and internationalizes the conflict

New Delhi's coercive posture in 1987 was based on a second assessment: Colombo was attempting to balance Indian influence by reaching out to extra-regional support, which threatened to internationalize the conflict and affect regional security.[439]

Especially after 1983, President Julius Richard Jayewardene – who Indians informally called "Yankee Dick" for his pro-American inclinations – engaged in an "effort at searching for a countervailing force or forces against Indian pressure" despite being well aware of New Delhi's concern at his attempts "to draw away from the traditional non-aligned positions."[440] The policy was motivated by the traditionally pro-Western foreign policy of his party (the UNP), as well as by heightened geopolitical concerns after the invasion of Afghanistan, the need for reliable partners to assist in military modernization, and a new strategy to liberalize the island's struggling economy.[441]

---

[439] R. N. Kao, former director of India's external intelligence (RAW) and adviser to I. Gandhi, 1981-84: "Sri Lanka became a seat for outside influences which we consider not very friendly towards us. Naturally, it caused some concern." Quoted in Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian intervention in Sri Lanka: the role of India's intelligence agencies* (Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993), 23.

[440] De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 586, 89.

[441] On his geopolitical views, see De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 400-22. Even before 1983, Indian Foreign Secretary M. K. Rasgotra recalls incessant concern from Sri Lankan officials, including his counterpart W. T. Jayasinghe: "when are you going to invade Sri Lanka?" (Interview 040). On his economic liberalization program, see De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 450-73; De Silva, *Regional powers*, 37-54. According to U.S. Ambassador W. H. Wriggins, Washington, the World Bank and the IMF, "thought this was marvelous, to find a democratic government that had seen the light and was really following liberal economic principles" http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Wriggins,%20William%20Howard.toc.pdf

To achieve this and to reduce Indian pressure, Jayewardene knocked on every possible door for assistance. The United States initially welcomed economic liberalization and facilitated Sri Lanka's outreach to Israel.[442] But despite repeated requests, Washington denied any military assistance, advising Jayewardene instead to respect India's predominant regional role and concerns.[443] Howard Schaffer, the U.S. State Department country director for Sri Lanka at the time, recalls that relations were "better than they had ever been" and Washington "enthusiastic" about Jayewardene for his new economic policies, but that "our basic policy was to support the Indians in their mediation efforts … [and] not provide the Sri Lankan government with any military assistance."[444]

Sri Lanka's outreach to China faced a similar fate: private expressions of sympathy against Indian interference but only limited military assistance and a persistent refusal to get entangled in the conflict at the risk of Indian hostility. For example, following PM Premadasa's 1979 outreach visit to Beijing, the Chinese make a few supportive statements ("big should not bully the small") and supply weapons, but when Jayewardene visits in May 1984, he is told by Deng Xiaoping that "it was in his interest to reach a negotiated settlement with India."[445]

---

[442] Despite concerns by the U.S. State Department, Eagleburger, V. Walters, and C. Weinberger decided to deliver on Jayewardene's request for facilitation with Israel, which opens an interest section at the United States Embassy in June 1984: http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Reed,%20John%20H.toc.pdf p.25]

[443] U.S. Ambassador J. Reed on Secretary of Defense C. Weinberger's meeting with Jayewardene, Oct. 1, 1983: "They used every possibility to get us to influence the situation, and to help them out. [But] We were very careful, very even handed. They wanted to buy more arms, and munitions from us … they were looking for help wherever they could get it", but "we could not get involved." [http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Reed,%20John%20H.toc.pdf 20-21] The Sri Lankan DCM in Washington at the time confirms: the U.S. answer was always "go and talk to the Indians," making it clear they were "not going to come in between India and Sri Lanka." (Interview 064), see also John Gooneratne, *A decade of confrontation: Sri Lanka and India in the 1980s* (Pannipitiya: Stamford Lake, 2000), 105-17.

[444] "We believed that the involvement of any outside power should be left to the Indians … It was quite clear that the Indians were deeply involved; there was no reason why we should be as well" [http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Schaffer,%20Howard%20B.toc.pdf pp. 93, 118]

[445] De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 588-9. See also Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 306.

Attempts to link up economically with Singapore and to join ASEAN, between 1980 and 1983, also failed.[446] Finally, in 1985, Jayewardene reached out to India's archrival Pakistan, where he was received with open arms and able to secure important military assistance – so he called it "a better friend than India."[447]

Because of its partial success, New Delhi was initially tolerant of Sri Lanka's balancing strategy, but as it persisted the threat assessment increased.[448] Despite international accusations of over-sensitiveness, New Delhi had good reasons to be worried.[449] By 1986, Sri Lanka had managed to rope in a rising number of Israeli and Pakistani military advisers, adding on to British and other foreign mercenaries, as well as Chinese weapon supplies.[450]

---

[446] See Kuan Yew Lee, *From Third World to first: the Singapore story, 1965-2000* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 416-7; Mervyn De Silva, *Crisis commentaries: selected political writings of Mervyn de Silva* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2001), 71; De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 417-19.

[447] Apr. 18, 1986, in an interview to *Radio Australia* Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1284-5. On his visit to Islamabad in March 1985, and Pakistani military supplies as a "tremendous encouragement" in the words of the Sri Lankan Army Commander, see De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 608-9; Ranatunga, *Adventurous journey*, 111.

[448] M. K. Narayanan recalls that Jayewardene was being "extremely shrewd" and "difficult" by "playing American and Pakistani cards … We didn't have an equivalent Monroe doctrine, but India was not prepared to accept any Sri Lankan behavior to India's security detriment." (Interview 077). It thus became clear that while "India tends to see its security interests as coincidental with that of Sri Lanka … [t]he latter does not always share this view." Narayanan, "Role of Intelligence," 115.

[449] Such criticism notes India's "almost obsessive concern" about any foreign presence in Sri Lanka, for example in the Trincomalee port or about the Voice of America retransmission station planned North of Colombo after 1983: De Silva, *Regional powers*, 25-26, 114-16. It is questionable whether Indians were genuinely concerned about these projects, or using them to whip domestic support or bargain for external support, e.g. with the Soviet Union: July 03, 1987, R. Gandhi tells Gorbachev "we think that the Americans want to obtain a base in Trincomalee." quoted in Srinath Raghavan, "At the Cusp of Transformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M.; Mohan Malone, C. Raja; Raghavan, Srinath (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 128.

[450] After Sri Lanka lifted trade restrictions with Israel, in June 1985, Tel-Aviv supplied Shinbet officers for training and defence supplies, including *Uzi* guns and *Dvora* patrol boats. By 1986, 178 Israeli officials were serving in Sri Lanka. On British and other foreign mercenaries after 1983, including Pakistani Special Forces, see Gunaratna, *Indian intervention*, 11-13. The Army Commander recalls: "China, Pakistan, and Israel were the only nations which were willing to provide military assistance for us in those darkest hours." Ranatunga, *Adventurous journey*, 111.

In India's view, Sri Lanka's balancing strategy risked internationalizing the conflict with a triple negative effect.[451] First, by increasing Colombo's incentive to opt for a military solution, it decreased the success chances of Indian mediation.[452] Second, by simultaneously involving and playing off rival powers, it threatened to transform the conflict into an arena for extra-regional rivalries and, in particular, a into a proxy theater for Cold War competition.[453] And third, by signaling commitment to a military solution, Colombo would drive Tamil insurgents to respond either by falling back even further onto Indian territory, or by roping in their own extra-regional support.[454] Summarizing the Indian position in March 1987, India's deputy minister for External Affairs, K. N. Singh, thus noted that

> *…the meddling of outside powers, not entirely friendly to India is naturally a grave concern to us and to our security and we are keeping a very watchful eye on what is going on … [the Indian and regional] security environment is being affected with hostile countries getting involved in the affairs of Sri Lanka and getting involved in their Defence processes, whether it is in the capacity of mercenaries or advisers (…) If all these armaments keep coming in, if the Defence budget continues to grow, then obviously something is going to happen in Sri Lanka which must have adverse affects not only in our [bilateral] relationship, but [also] on the [regional] security environment.[455]*

---

[451] March 24, 1986 warning by the Indian External Affairs Minister: "they got involved in another wrong policy in calling Mossad … and SAS mercenaries as well as those of South Africa reportedly, in order to build up the military muscles and to deal with their own people," in MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1986," (New Delhi 1988), 71.

[452] See e.g. Aug. 16, 1984 by the deputy EAM R. R. Mirdha: "[the] ethnic problem in Sri Lanka can not be solved by military action … to our profound regret and unease, [Sri Lankan government] has thought it fit to induct outside security agencies into a domestic political situation," Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1632.

[453] M. K. Narayanan thus notes that "apart from diminishing India's role in a traditional area of its influence, this seemed to enhance chances of unhealthy security competition in the region," Narayanan, "Role of Intelligence," 117. PM R. Gandhi on Aug. 7, 1987: "The Sri Lankan crisis has shown how hostile forces can exploit difficulties in other regions to introduce unwarranted presences, threatening presences, presences that threaten regional stability and regional security." MEA, "FAR 1987," 273.

[454] J. N. Dixit, in 1989: "Discrimination [against a minority] backed up by force will only result in, first militancy and terrorism, and then separatism (…) that minority is [then] bound to seek assistance from foreign sources, who are inimical to your country." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 2353.

[455] March 19, 1987, deputy EAM K. N. Singh in parliament: MEA, "FAR 1987," 93, 96.

India's approach is, however paradoxically, best defined by Sri Lankans themselves, especially in its diplomatic apparatus and the opposition who, up to 1987, repeatedly cautioned President Jayewardene against balancing India, and lobbied him to pursue an alternative model of neutralism or *finlandization*.[456]

A Sri Lankan diplomat privy to such internal debates in the 1980s thus notes that Jayewardene's strategy went against the "modes of behavior expected by India of the other countries of [the] subcontinent" and that New Delhi's denial attempts were therefore a "perfectly understandable attitude, squarely in the realist mode of thinking."[457] Speaking six months before the Indian airdrop, in January 1987, the Sri Lankan opposition leader A. Bandaranaike emphasized that "the Indian Government had one fundamental concept in its domestic and foreign policy, which the [Sri Lankan] Government has failed to understand: … As long as India feels that there is no [extra-regional] geopolitical threat from Sri Lanka, India will do anything to help us."[458]

Spillover and contagion: Tamil solidarity and domestic security

A third and final Indian assessment that determined 1987's coercive posture related to the rising capability and mobility of the Tamil insurgents, which threatened to affect India's

---

[456] See e.g. brief prepared by FM Hameed for Jayewardene, before his June visit to the United States, noting that "[the] economic and political strategies of this Government would inevitably lead it to subserve global U.S. interests in a matter threatening her [India's] basic security interest," Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 147-8. In June 1985, G. Dissanayake submits a study on India-Sri Lanka relations, proposing a model based on past Finland-USSR relations. De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 614.

[457] Gooneratne, *A Decade*, 71, 198. For an internal critique: "Sri Lanka's foreign policy must be centered on a non-hostile relationship with India" but Jayewardene "ignored geo-politics, [and] the implications of the geo-strategic importance of India vis-à-vis the superpowers," De Silva, *Crisis Commentaries*, 78.

[458] Speaking in parliament on Jan. 8: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1369.

domestic security, in particular in its border state of Tamil Nadu.[459] In the 1960s, India

had successfully dealt with its own variant of Tamil separatism, but Sri Lanka's

incapability to do so began to pose a threat to its own stability, given the strong cross-

border links between both communities.[460]

M. K. Narayanan, who dealt with the insurgents from Chennai since the late 1970s and

then rose to become chief of the Intelligence Bureau [IB], recalls India's concerns:

> *The issue was we were trying to see the mirror image of what would happen [in India] if Eelam [an independent Tamil state] was created. … We could not afford a breakaway group, even in another country, which had many similarities with India. So [the] basic issue was we had to preserve our own domestic security, and to know how to go about to protect Indian unity. If you [are] seen as permitting, in a neighbourhood that has great fraternity across [all its other] borders, an Eelam to exist with or without [our] support, then you [will] have problems in your other areas. This [was] the bigger strategic issue. … Everything in Sri Lanka was impinging directly on India's internal security.[461]*

A variety of factors informed this Indian assessment after 1983, leading New Delhi to

warn Colombo repeatedly about the conflict's repercussions on Indian territorial

integrity, domestic stability and security.[462] First, from the late 1970s the Tamil insurgent

organizations had built a wide network in Southern India for financial, logistical and

political support, including training bases – often with assistance from local organizations

and even the state government.[463] Second, after Colombo started pursuing Northward

---

[459] J. N. Dixit alludes to the salience of proximity: "Had Sri Lanka been 15,000 miles away with seas in between, like Fiji is, perhaps our involvement could have been less." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 2347.

[460] Sri Lankan Tamils had long been inspired by Tamil Nadu's separatist *Dravidistan* agenda and its autonomy within India after the 1950s. After their non-violent, federal profile failed and morphed into a separatist insurgency, they turned increasingly to Tamil Nadu for assistance, encouraged by India's role in supporting Bengali secessionism during the 1971 war in East Pakistan: Wilson, *Chelvanayakam*, 118 fn 7-8.

[461] Interview 077.

[462] Sept. 27, 1984, deputy EAM R. N. Mirdha, at the UN General Assembly: "If the spate of violence in the northern province continues, it is bound to have serious repercussions in other parts of Sri Lanka and precipitate in influx of refugees into our country (…) the repression and denial of human and political rights of the Tamils in Sri Lanka give rise to repercussions in our country." MEA, "FAR 1984," 275.

[463] This domestic angle is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The Joint Secretary covering Sri Lanka, K. Sahdev, recalls rising concern from intelligence agencies after the 1960s: "Slowly but surely, Sri Lanka was

military offensives after 1983, the insurgents were forced to fall back on their Indian bases, which further entangled Tamil Nadu in the conflict. Third, the rising inflow of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka – more than 90,000 by 1985 – accelerated the spillover effect as the conflict escalated.[464] Fourth, after 1982, the myriad of rival insurgent organizations started to attack each other for influence and resources on Indian territory, which further destabilized the border region. Finally, New Delhi feared a contagion effect of transnational solidarity and revival of the Tamil separatist agenda in India.[465]

It is against this background that the Government of India began to train and equip some of the Tamil insurgents in a secret operation after 1983.[466] The reasoning was that this would a) enhance Indian leverage to pressure Colombo into pursuing a political solution;[467] b) build a limited self-defense capability for the Tamil minority to deter further military offensives and push the conflict into a stalemate;[468] c) increase the central government's operational control over various rival insurgent groups that threatened

becoming a domestic problem for us [so we kept telling GoSL] 'please put your house in order'. … [but] neighboring instability kept begging more [Indian] interventionism and proactive policy" (Interview 013). Different Tamil insurgent organizations also frequently clashed with each other and the Indian police in Madras, and bombed its airport, killing 29, in Aug. 1984.

[464] MEA, "FAR 1985," 98, 114-15. Just during the Army's 1985 offensive, a peak of 12,000 refugees arrived at an average of 500 per day: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 199-202.

[465] M. K. Narayanan notes that, at least until the late 1970s, the separatist factor had weighed in IB assessments, "because we were not sure if these parties [DMK and other regional parties] had really ditched such principles" (Interview 077). High Commissioner J. N. Dixit also recalls that "there was a perception that if India did not support the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka … there would be a resurgence of Tamil separatism in India" Dixit, *Assignment*, 328.

[466] By 1986, India had allegedly trained 2000 LTTE, 8000 PLOTE, 1500 EPRLF, 1250 EROS, and 1500 TELO insurgents, according to Gunaratna, *Indian intervention*, 5-8, 22-23, 34-48, 135-59.

[467] Foreign Secretary M. K. Rasgotra recalls I. Gandhi's strategy: "by strengthening Tamils we'll get a stronger hand over GoSL" (Interview 040). A former High Commissioner to Sri Lanka notes that the "aim was to acquire leverage over President Jayewardene" given Indian assessment that he "would not take the Tamils seriously until they presented a threat to him," Thomas Abraham, "The Emergence of the LTTE and the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Agreement of 1987," in *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons* ed. Rupesinghe Kumar (Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006), 20.

[468] A minister in the Tamil Nadu government, P. Ramachandran, recalls that, after 1983, instead of a military intervention, the policy was to "equip the [Tamil] boys, give them some arms, to help them protect Tamil civilians from the unilateral onslaught of Sri Lankan armed forces. … LTTE was going for [separatist] homeland and all that but that was not in the [Indian] scheme of things" (Interview 031).

India's domestic order and security, and chaotically thrived under informal and competing patronage from local authorities and political parties;[469] and d) cultivate the insurgent organizations to participate in negotiations and to eventually reform as disarmed stakeholders in a post-conflict settlement.

This last objective was particularly important, and was aprly summarized by M. K. Narayanan, who dealt with the Tamil issue at the Intelligence Bureau during the 1980s. As the main motives for the training he recalls: 1) to avoid that "islands of support for the militants' cause soon mushroomed" in India and "ensure that the militant factions were kept in line;" 2) Collect intelligence, especially on foreign military advisers and mercenaries in Sri Lanka, and also on insurgents' plans of escalation, location of illegal training bases, weapons supply routes, money laundering and other criminal activities in or via India; 3) "maintain 'lines of communication' open" to gain insurgents' confidence so as to "reaching a modus vivendi with the militant leadership," "keep them satisfied regarding India's bona fide intentions", and transform them into "agents of influence for any future eventuality;" and 4) Lay ground-work for a political dialogue, using support as leverage to "create a 'coalition of the willing parties' inclined to a negotiated solution," and keep support "so that they could be prevailed upon later to participate in the negotiations" and to abandon their separatist quest for *Eelam*.[470]

As underlined even by the Sri Lankan author of one of the most critical accounts of the Indian involvement, the operation to train insurgents "was not aimed at dividing the

---

[469] M. K. Narayanan recalls that the IB's main concern was whether the conflict could pose a "serious threat to peace and order" and "lead to an implosion on Indian soil," and whether its escalation and refugee influx could "lead to a 'Bangladesh type' of situation and call for urgent contingency measures," Narayanan, "Role of Intelligence," 116, 18.

[470] Narayanan, "Role of Intelligence," 120-23.

island into two, but to give a clear message to Colombo … However, for five long years [1983-7] Colombo never seemed to understand that message."[471]

While many of these objectives would fail over the next few years, with particularly dramatic repercussions for India's military involvement after 1987, it is important to note that the Tamil insurgency had developed its links to India long before New Delhi's secret operation, that the training program was intended to minimize the conflict's destabilizing spillover effect on Indian territory, and that it was directed at ending, not perpetuating the conflict or facilitate Sri Lanka's breakup.[472] As Thomas Abraham, the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka had noted in 1979, India was fully committed to protect Sri Lanka's territorial integrity, but only committed to non-interference as long as Colombo recognized that "the security and territorial integrity of both our countries are inextricably linked up."[473] Yet, in 1987, by pursuing a military solution that created further waves of refugees and incentives for the Tamil insurgents to fall back on Indian support bases, Colombo had crossed another Indian red line, ignoring New Delhi's understanding of Indo-Sri Lankan inextricable security links.

*

India's adoption of a coercive posture in 1987, seeking to enforce a liberal solution on Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, was determined by a three-fold strategic assessment after the

---

[471] Gunaratna, *Indian intervention*, 6, see also 33.

[472] On initially India playing off different insurgent groups to maximize control, preferring TELO and only switching to LTTE at a later point, A. Balasingham recalls that "India was trying to balance us [LTTE] with the others," quoted in Abraham, "Emergence of the LTTE," 20-22. On why India favoured the LTTE after 1985, M. K. Narayanan recalls: "[the] clearest thinking from the LTTE. Balasingham was amazing in his foresight, concerned about future, and anxious that India should play a role. Others were [just] militant groups. [The] LTTE alone had a broader vision and agenda …[so] In some ways it was much easier [for us] to deal with the LTTE than with the smaller militant groups, the Uma Maheshwaran's etc. which didn't have much [appeal, vision, legitimacy]. It was helpful to have the LTTE – even if led by a psychotic leader," (Interview 077).

[473] Speaking in Jaffna, June 20: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 134.

declining effectiveness of its mediation attempts after the 1983 race riots: 1) President Jayewardene's reluctant and resistant posture, as he refused to commit to India's agenda of a negotiated settlement and pursued a military solution instead, which was compounded by the lack of any credible alternative in Colombo; 2) Jayewardene's foreign and security policy of extra-regional diversification threatened to internationalize the conflict, affect the regional security balance, and undermine India's predominance; 3) The escalating conflict threatened the order and stability in the border region of Tamil Nadu, with the nexus of a rising number of incoming refugees and the insurgents' new mobility and operational capability impinging on Indian domestic security. Taken together, these assessments led to the perception of a narrowing window of opportunity to terminate the conflict: a united and stable Sri Lanka depended on a successful liberalization of its constitution and, conversely, India's domestic and regional security depended on a united and stable Sri Lanka.[474]

3. Burma 1988

India's support for the Burmese pro-democracy uprising in 1988 has been described as a classic example of its allegedly "idealist" foreign policy. Indeed, the government immediately denounced the military crackdown, supported the protestors, and called for free elections and political reforms. However, beyond spontaneous ideological identification with democratic aspirations or personal idiosyncrasies, the Indian coercive posture against the military regime was determined by three strategic assessments: 1)

---

[474] Part II of the dissertation examines these issues more closely, including a) India's strategic thought on the link between liberalization, order and security; and b) how this influenced Indian strategic practice.

General Ne Win's archaic and authoritarian regime had been unresponsive to repeated Indian attempts to increase cooperation, and was collapsing; 2) the domestic security situation in India's insurgency-ridden Northeast required cross-border support from Rangoon, which Burma's Army – the *Tatmadaw* – had not delivered on; and 3) the Chinese had already made inroads with the authoritarian regime which were expected to further accelerate under military rule, threatening India's geopolitical primacy in the region. On all these fronts a new democratic regime in Burma was seen as a harbinger of greater cooperation to further India's economic, domestic and regional security interests.

<div align="center">*</div>

General Ne Win had formally resigned three weeks earlier, but the authoritarian regime he had built since the coup of 1962 survived – and so did his astrological obsession with the number 9, which had led him to demonetize existing *kyat* bills with odd denominations of 45 and 90.[475] So it was on the opposite astrological belief of the number 8 as auspicious to a new order that, on Monday, August 8, 1988 (8-8-88), around half a million protesters flooded downtown Rangoon to defy martial law and demand democracy. Shortly before midnight, the Burmese Army's 22nd, 44th and 77th Light Infantry Divisions began firing into the crowd, initiating a violent crackdown that would kill around 3,000 unarmed civilians over the next few days.[476] The Indian Embassy, which overlooked the protests' epicenter, immediately opened its gates to provide "humanitarian assistance" and treated injured students and monks in a makeshift

---

[475] Donald M. Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2006), 338.

[476] http://www.massviolence.org/The-repression-of-the-August-8-12-1988-8-8-88-uprising-in?cs=print

hospital.[477] As violence and political uncertainty continued to reign in Rangoon for the following weeks, the Indian government came out in full support of the uprising:

> *We have noted the undaunted resolve of the Burmese people to establish a fully democratic structure in their country. This aspiration fully accords with India's firm commitment to democracy. It is our hope that the Burmese people will be able to fulfill their legitimate democratic aspirations for a representative government. The need of the hour is for the unity and consensus of democratic forces for a peaceful and orderly transition to permit free and fair elections.[478]*

On September 18, a military coup aborted constitutional attempts to embrace democratic reforms and established the Army-led State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).[479] Throughout this period and thereafter, at least until the SLORC cancelled the outcome of the 1990 parliamentary election won by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), New Delhi publically pressured the Burmese military regime into implementing political reforms towards democratization. [480] India's Ambassador in Rangoon at the time, I. P. Singh, recalled:

> *"From the very start of the movement, the Indian Embassy, under instruction from Delhi, took a firm stand in support of Burmese people's demand for democracy. Perhaps it was for the first time that the silly argument of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries even when vital issues affecting human rights are involved, was not resorted to." [481]*

Beyond just words, India also interfered by hosting refugees, curtailing diplomatic relations and providing various pro-democracy organizations with logistical and financial

---

[477] The Embassy provided "medicines and surgical supplies to volunteer organisations," who helped the wounded: Indu P. Singh, "India-Burma Relations," *World Focus*, no. xx January (1992): 10.

[478] Sept. 10, by MEA spokesperson: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1988," (New Delhi 1989), 290.

[479] On uncertainty after July, the short-lived interim government, and his role as President until the coup in Sept., see Maung Maung, *The 1988 uprising in Burma* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[480] Speaking at the UN General Assembly on Oct. 4, EAM P. V. N. Rao: "[India] watched with growing concern the trails and tribulations faced by the people of Burma (…) we cannot but sympathise with democratic aspirations." MEA, "FAR 1988," 336.

[481] Singh, "India-Burma Relations," 10.

support.[482] India shifted to pursue engagement with Rangoon's generals only in 1991, after it became clear that the military regime had entrenched itself permanently.

Much has been written on how India's liberal posture cut official relations with Burma in that intermediary period, from 1988 to 1991, and how it hindered normalization attempts thereafter.[483] Less attention, however, has been devoted to the motivations behind the initial decision, in 1988. Why did India take a coercive posture and support democracy? Existing explanations underline India's liberal preferences (ideology), idiosyncrasies of PM R. Gandhi and the Indian ambassador (personality), or a spontaneous and haphazard process (chance).[484] While all these factors did play an influence, India's posture was, however, determined by three strategic assessments.

---

[482] Indian support included: 1) Intent to recognize former PM U Nu's planned interim government in Sept. 1988, and facilitating compromises between his and other groups, especially the NLD; 2) Financial and logistical support to pro-democracy organizations in Burma, as well as those operating in exile (Thailand, India); 3) Open border policy, especially via camps in Northeast India, to host several thousand refugees; 4) PM R. Gandhi's support to allow AIR Burmese programming to expand frequency and contents; 5) Curtailing diplomatic relations to a minimum, delaying appointment of a new ambassador after 1989, and imposing restrictions on Indian trade and investments.

[483] These factors are examined in more detail in chapters 5 and 6. Ambassador R. Bhatia thus notes: India followed a "clear, courageous and principled policy line", because given levels of violence "silence could not be an option" and thus "New Delhi was in the forefront to support its democratic aspirations, even at the cost of damage to government-to-government relations" Rajiv K. Bhatia, *India-Myanmar relations: changing contours* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016), 99-100.

[484] On 1988's "idealist India" that made a "realist turnaround" in the 1990s, see Renaud Egreteau, *Wooing the generals: India's new Burma policy* (New Delhi: Authorspress 2003), 43, 132. 1988 is also described as an "idealist position" and a "curious mix of conscious decision and ignorance," Bibhu P. Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1(2011): 300, 04. On personality and chance: "a logical choice, more spontaneous than carefully thought-out (…) Often presented as a well-calculated pro-democracy stance by activist circles, India's position after 1988 was primarily the outcome of the personal and impulsive engagement of a handful of high-profile people," Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and diplomacy in Burma: understanding the foreign relations of the Burmese praetorian state* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), 150, 52.

Rangoon's increasingly weak and non-cooperative regime

The first assessment related to General Ne Win's non-responsiveness to repeated Indian attempts throughout the 1980s to strengthen and expand bilateral relations, compounded by the declining domestic power of his regime.

Burmese isolationism had lead Ne Win to insulate his country by limiting contact with its neighbors, and even to abandon the Non-Aligned Movement, in 1979. In 1982, the country also passed a new discriminatory citizenship law classifying the Indian minority as "guest citizens." So while Indian governmental mantras of the mid-1980s internally assured that "our relations with Burma are cordial," the relationship was stagnant.[485]

Since the early 1980s, successive Indian governments had tried to reach out to Rangoon, which responded with the sound of silence or diplomatic platitudes about the bonds of history and the Buddha.[486] Indian diplomats posted in Rangoon, with the mission to make new inroads, thus complained about bilateral relations being in a "frozen state," Burmese ministers being unresponsive to any Indian proposals, and their efforts thus leading to "minimal outcomes".[487]

T. P. Sreenivasan, who served as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon between 1983 and 1986, recalls relations being so stagnant that the only mission he received from his Foreign Secretary when departing New Delhi was to close the poultry farm which the

---

[485] Apr. 9, 1985: deputy EAM, K. A. Khan, responding to parliamentarian G. G. Swell's reproach that India treated Burma as a "fire brigade," only when it mattered: MEA, "FAR 1985," 100.

[486] E.g. in 1985, the Burmese FM U Chit Hlaing visits India, and quotes from King Alaung's prayer, etched in the Golden Cave Pagoda of Pagan: MEA, "FAR 1985," 159-61.

[487] S. Devare, posted in Rangoon as counselor with the "task to find ways to further the relationship," (1980-82) recalls: "much was tried to re-open the closed contacts between Burma and India though without much progress … Burmese leaders were not so keen and were also inactive. … it was India that seemed to seek a closer relationship. On our side, there was a thought that we must pay greater attention to Burma." http://www.associationdiplomats.org/publications/ifaj/Vol6/6.3/6.3%20ORAL%20HISTORY.pdf 348

Indian ambassador kept at his residence, to the annoyance of Burmese authorities: "There was nothing one could do on the political side, given Ne Win's policy of distancing Burma from its neighbors" and this was "frustrating as we made no headway with the host government on any of the issues that interested us."[488]Foreign diplomats shared the assessment, expressing particular surprise at Burma's lack of response to India's repeated overtures.[489]

A further obstacle came with the death of PM Indira Gandhi, in 1984, and the end of her excellent personal rapport with General Ne Win, first established in the 1960s.[490] Taking over power to succeed his mother at the young age of 40, Rajiv Gandhi's energetic attempts to renew bilateral relations seemed to annoy the 73-year old senior Burmese general who, in 1984, advised him "not to bulldoze his way forward in his youthful zeal, for India is also an ancient land where the elders must also be respected even though they might appear to him to be slow and out of date."[491]

But Rajiv Gandhi persisted in "his desire to put some life into India-[Burma] relations," and after several delays on Rangoon's side, he finally visited the Eastern neighbor on

---

[488] T. P. Sreenivasan, *Words, words, words: adventures in diplomacy* (New Delhi: Longman, 2011), 60.

[489] The U.S. ambassador D. O'Donohue recalls Burma as "backwaters" in the 1980s: "what struck me was how devoid of substance Indian-Burmese relations were. This seemed to reflect a deliberate attitude by the Burmese." http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/O%27Donohue,%20Daniel%20A.toc.pdf 141

[490] I have correspondence between them in my possession, indicating a very close rapport, particularly in the early 1970s. Indira Gandhi had been to Burma in Dec. 1964, on a private visit at Ne Win's invitation. R. D. Katari, *A sailor remembers* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982), 141.

[491] Quoted by Burmese President Maung Maung, referring to Ne Win's Nov. 1984 visit to India, to pay his delayed respect to I. Gandhi after missing her funeral. Despite expressing his preference for a simple, sober and "private visit," he was given all honors, with the Indian President, PM R. Gandhi and his wife receiving him at the airport. Maung recalls that the Indian President "entrusted" R. Gandhi to Ne Win's care: "You are a friend of the family, please regard Rajiv as a nephew" and the Burmese general took "his role as uncle seriously," Maung, *1988 Uprising*, 255-6. K. N. Singh also recalls that during R. Gandhi's visit to Burma in 1988, Ne Win kept speaking in a "patronizing" tone, repeatedly and nostalgically mentioning events during Nehru and Indira Gandhi's period, "while you were just a kid" (Interview 075).

December 15, 1987 – the first of an Indian Prime Minister in almost twenty years.[492] He put in much work to prepare, taking along a 15-member delegation, several symbolic gifts, and a myriad of proposals to foster regional and economic links: his speech underlined the importance to foster "cooperation in South Asia, whose natural … frontiers extend from Afghanistan … to Burma."[493]

But to his "great disappointment" the visit was marked by what his deputy minister of External Affairs described as one of his diplomatic career's most "bizarre" experiences: a meeting of just thirty minutes with Ne Win, who in an "avuncular tone" and to the Indian Prime Minister's "controlled indignation" brushed off all Indian proposals, from opening a tourist office to increasing trade, technical exchanges and counter-insurgency cooperation.[494] The Indian outreach ended after a little more than 24 hours, as "a bold but failed attempt to revitalise the relationship."[495]

The visit's failure was more than just symbolic, because it came just as the authoritarian regime faced an unprecedented crisis after Ne Win's abrupt demonetization policy in late 1987. Rajiv Gandhi saw this as a window of opportunity, hoping the visit would help to nudge the old general into embracing political and economic reforms with India's helping hand. In New Delhi's assessment, the measures had initiated an irreversible mass

---

[492] Singh, *Walking*, 124. The MEA's Joint Secretary in charge of Burma at the time, K. Sahdev, recalls that R. Gandhi was committed to going but that since "getting to him [Ne Win] was difficult," the visit was postponed several times and only confirmed "last-minute" (Interview 013, also 075).

[493] http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS87-12.pdf.

[494] K. N. Singh further notes that "Rajiv Gandhi kept his cool. … It was, to say the least, a frustrating experience." Singh, *Walking*, 125-6. K. Sahdev recalls: "Strange meeting" as Ne Win worried about possible sanctions, increasing isolation, suffering from petrol shortages. Instead of responding to RG's bold proposals, he kept talking about his personal plans to design a new gas-to-petrol plant, waving at an engineering map, discussing technical issues, asking for assistance. R. Gandhi was "worried and kept asking us: 'why is he so focused on that little issue'?" (Interview 013). Ne Win did not receive, nor send off the Indian delegation at the airport.

[495] Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 123. K. Sahdev: "an underwhelming visit" (Interview 013). R. Gandhi's main foreign policy adviser, R. Sen, refers to it as "nothing special: no real meeting of minds" (Interview 081).

movement of popular discontent, which indeed led to a wave of student protests, riots, and violence during the Spring of 1988.[496] In April, A. S. Suu Kyi returned to her motherland to become the movement's iconic leader, in June the Buddhist joined hands with the students, and in late July Ne Win resigned after a quarter of a century in power. As the old, non-cooperative regime collapsed, New Delhi looked forward to change.[497]

The *Tatmadaw*'s counter-insurgent unwillingness and incapacity

> *Geostrategically, Myanmar straddles an area which dominates our security perceptions in more than one dimension.[498]*
>
> J. N. Dixit, Indian Foreign Secretary, 1991-1994.

A second assessment that determined India's pro-democracy posture in 1987 related to the Burmese Army's persistent unwillingness and incapacity to render cross-border cooperation to Indian counter-insurgency efforts in its Northeastern border regions.

Since the 1960s, the Indian state had become entangled in a low-intensity war against dozens of insurgent groups fighting for secession in its semi-enclaved Northeast, a chronically underdeveloped region surrounded by China, East Pakistan (Bangladesh after 1971), and Burma. Since then, Beijing had trained, armed, funded and hosted thousands of these insurgents to combat the Indian state, both indirectly through East Pakistan and

---

[496] Assessment of the Indian ambassador at the time, in Singh, "India-Burma Relations," 7-10. V. Sood, at the time representing India's external intelligence agency (RAW) in Rangoon, recalls sending a note to New Delhi in May, 1988: "something eerie, too quiet, something is about to happen, trouble brewing" underlining the devastating effect of Ne Win's recent economic policies, and referring to newly-arrived A. S. Suu Kyi as "the totem pole the [pro-democracy] activists were waiting for" (Interview 032).

[497] Indian diplomat R. Bhatia, who worked on Burma at the time and would go on to be posted as ambassador there in the 2000s, sums this assessment up cogently: "In 1988, democracy seemed likely to descend on Burma; in 1992, the army rule was assessed to be well entrenched [so] India had to return to its traditional policy to do business with whosoever wielded power." Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 102.

[498] J. N. Dixit, *India's foreign policy and its neighbours* (New Delhi: Gyan, 2001), 238.

directly in Southwestern China, accessed with the assistance of insurgents in Northern Burma.[499] While China curtailed direct support in the mid-1970s, Indian military and intelligence continued to monitor links through this Burmese corridor with heightened concern throughout the 1980s.[500]

After formal Chinese support ceased and the Indian Army stepped up its counter-insurgency operations, insurgents became increasingly dependent on fallback positions in Northern Burma, in connivance with their co-ethnic groups across the border. Within India's territory, conflicts had stabilized after a successful mix of counter-insurgent force and political inducements led to a series of cease-fires and peace accords in the 1980s.[501] But new splinter groups moved across the border into Northern Burma, where they linked up with local insurgents fighting Rangoon and profited from a strategic location on one of the main routes of the booming Golden Triangle's heroin trade.[502] India's

---

[499] Chinese support peaked between 1966 and the late 1970s. In East Pakistan, e.g. "China-Pakistan Coordination Bureau" established in 1969, and around 5000 Nagas and 7000 Mizo insurgents trained until 1971. Several NNC, MNF and PLA batches were also trained in Yunnan, which they accessed with KIA support through Northern Burma. After 1970s, limited contact, as China rejects insurgents' requests for further training, despite indications of proxy use for intelligence gathering: Lintner, *Great game*, xviii, 157-60, 336-45; Subir Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), 157-63.

[500] P. Heblikar, who was deployed for RAW in the Northeast border states in the late 1980s, rejects Beijing's argument that such support was, at the time, by renegade or retired PLA officers, and notes that there were clear indications that China kept its outreach to the insurgents for intelligence (Interview 047).

[501] R. N. Ravi (ex-IB director) on how Naga insurgency changed in the 1980s, becoming a "fratricidal" fight among its various tribes: "By the 1980s, ultra-radical nationalists were pushed to the margins of the Naga political space. … The Naga issue began inching towards a sort of Chekhovian resolution." http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/nagaland-descent-into-chaos/article5607599.ece The Indian government created various special administrative councils to respond to grievances under the Constitution's 6th schedule. 1986: Peace agreement with the MNF ending two decades of insurgency in Mizoram. 1988: Peace agreement with the TNV, ending insurgency in Tripura. See Swarna Rajagopalan: http://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/ps046.pdf

[502] Leading, for example, to the creation of the Indo-Burmese Revolutionary Front (IBRF) in 1989, composed of the NSCN-K, ULFA, United Liberation Front of Bodoland, Kuki National Front (KNF) (all from India) and the Chin National Front (Myanmar): http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/ULFA2009.htm. The mid-1980s heroin boom in the Golden Triangle spread to India after Thailand and Laos enforced stricter laws in 1983 to ban acetic anhydride, which starts to be sourced from India.

domestic security in the Northeast therefore increasingly relied on denying these insurgents mobility and safe havens in Northern Burma.[503]

However, despite New Delhi's repeated attempts throughout the 1980s to reach out and increase defense and counter-insurgency cooperation, the Burmese Army (the *Tatmadaw*) remained fateful to Ne Win's principled isolationism, refusing coordinated or joint exercises with neighboring countries and any type of foreign military support.[504] This became apparent again in 1986, when Gen. K. Sundarji paid the first official visit of an Indian Army chief to Burma in several decades, only to see his offers of military assistance and greater counter-insurgency cooperation "turned down with characteristic Burmese courtesy."[505]

Rangoon also manifested a concerning lack of capacity to destroy the insurgents' safe havens in the North and to deny them capacity to strike in India.[506] In 1988, Burma's unwillingness and incapacity to support Indian counter-insurgency efforts had thus become a liability for domestic security in the Northeast, as noted by M. K. Narayanan, who directed the Intelligence Bureau at the time:

---

[503] For example, in Apr. 1988 the NSCN splits into Muivah and Khaplang hostile factions. With the latter mostly based in Myanmar, Indian intelligence thus starts supporting NSCN-K to pressure NSCN-IM: Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast*, 99. On India's intelligence games across the Indo-Burmese border in the 1988-1992 period, see also B. B. Nandy, "Security of the north-east Himalayan frontier: challenges and responses," in *Himalayan Frontiers of India: Historical, Geo-Political and Strategic*, ed. K. Warikoo (London: Routledge, 2009), 172-4; Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast*, 175-7.

[504] For example, in 1984, the Indian Defence Mininister had offered military training and assistance to modernize the Burmese Army, as well as joint operations, all of which were "politely declined," Singh, "India-Burma Relations," 8; Sreenivasan, *Words*, 63.

[505] Singh, "India-Burma Relations," 8. K. Sundarji visited to monitor the *Tatmadaw* offensive against the NSCN in Northern Burma, initiated in December 1985. Saw Maung recalls that the Indian Army Chief's offer of mountain artillery was refused by Burma: http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS91-05.pdf, and Lintner, *Great game*, 261.

[506] Noted by P. Heblikar, posted in Mizoram at the time for RAW (Interview 047). As an Army intelligence officer posted in Nagaland, Ajay Shukla recalls a late 1980s mission against the NSCN, and linking up with the Burmese Army in its Sagaing province: "our officers were surprised at how embattled the *Tatmadaw* unit was, and how relieved at the prospect of Indian collaboration" http://ajaishukla.blogspot.com/2015/06/squandering-away-myanmar-advantage.html.

> *"[there was in New Delhi a] general revulsion towards the [Burmese] military, which in any case was not helping us with dealing with the insurgencies on their side, which were helping our [India-based] insurgencies. So there was nothing very much going forward. … they were most unhelpful in the 1980s, so there was no particular reason why we should be supporting them. … we did not see the [Burmese] Army in any way as favorable."[507]*

Rising China and the geo-economic link to Southeast Asia

> *We regard Burma as a country in our 'immediate' neighbourhood – within the first of the concentric circles in our foreign policy parameters.[508]*

> S. Devare, former Indian Secretary (East), 1998-2001.

India's supportive posture towards liberal regime change in Rangoon was also motivated by a geostrategic assessment about China's expanding presence in Burma clashing with Indian attempts to link up with the high-growth economies of Southeast Asia.

After Burmese liberalization attempts faltered in the early 1990s and the country's authoritarian regime entrenched itself, New Delhi's allegedly "idealist" stance in 1988 is often castigated for having pushed Rangoon into Chinese hands.[509] Indeed, Beijing immediately accelerated its outreach to the isolated SLORC generals, who started to rely almost exclusively on Chinese trade, investment and military supplies to consolidate their grip.[510] But the Sino-Burmese rapprochement had begun much earlier, after Deng

---

[507] Interview 077.

[508] http://www.associationdiplomats.org/publications/ifaj/Vol6/6.3/6.3%20ORAL%20HISTORY.pdf p. 341

[509] For example: "[the] strategic consequence of this [1988] decision has visibly not been assessed by New Delhi's strategists. It was only in hindsight that certain thinkers and decisionmakers became conscious of the ominous effects of this break … [as] Yangon found itself in China's arms," Egreteau, *Wooing the generals: India's new Burma policy*, 196. See also Sikri, *Challenge and strategy: rethinking India's foreign policy*, 68.

[510] After 1989, China become Burma's major economic and military partner, starting with a trade agreement in Oct. 1989, followed by major defence acquisitions in the early 1990s: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1119/MR1119.appa.pdf p50. Khin Maung Win, in charge of Asia at the Burmese Foreign Ministry at the time, recalls that 1989 marked

Xiaoping's 1978 visit, leading to flourishing economic and security relations in the 1980s, in stark contrast with India's failed outreach attempts surveyed above.[511]

Commenting on this, the U. S. Ambassador in Burma recalls that, already in the mid-1980s, "China figured quite differently [from India] with the Burmese [as] there was a much more 'active' policy vis-a-vis China, in an effort, at a minimum, to counter Chinese interest in supporting the Sino-Burmese communist insurgency."[512] So, when in 1988 the authoritarian and military regime wavered, Beijing naturally kept quiet and hoped this would not affect its plans to transform Burma into one of its strategic access routes to the Indian Ocean.[513]

From New Delhi's perspective, however, as Ne Win's regime collapsed and a military government took over to promise a new constitution and to hold the first free multiparty elections in thirty years (won by the NLD in 1990), the country seemed likely to embrace massive political, economic and geostrategic changes that were expected to benefit India. In late 1988, New Delhi thus noted that it was "aware of the regional and international ramifications of the present developments in Burma" and accordingly adopted a liberal posture *because* of the China factor, and not despite of it.[514] In the view of one of Burma's

---

a "turning point," with Beijing emerging as "the only friend" since the generals had "no other door to knock on for help" (Interview 017).

[511] With China's "open-door" policy to foreign trade and investment after 1978, including new Special Economic Zones in the border province of Yunnan, Sino-Burmese bilateral trade shot up from US$10-20 m. in the late 1970s to US$40m in the mid-1980s. In the mid-1980s China also terminated support for the Communist Party of Burma insurgents, denying them mobility across the border and offering its top cadres inducements to retire. Lintner, *Great game*, 260-2. Relations were therefore already strong and thriving *before* 1988. See also Maung Aung Myoe, *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar's China Policy Since 1948* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), esp. 100.

[512] P. O'Donohue: http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/O%27Donohue,%20Daniel%20A.toc.pdf p. 142.

[513] For China's reluctant response to the 1988 events, first mobilizing the PLA on the border, and then backtracking to support the SLORC, see Myoe, *Pauk-Phaw*, 107. On China's strategic plans to develop an "Irrawady Corridor" to access the Indian Ocean, see Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 263-70, 91-6.

[514] Dec. 5 1988, EAM P. V. N. Rao to parliament: MEA, "FAR 1988," 405.

most experienced analysts, B. Lintner, supporting the students and monks on the streets was therefore "not for altruistic reasons alone; it was thought to have been India's way of countering China's influence in Burma."[515]

The China factor was compounded by early Indian attempts to reform its economy in the late 1980s, and the need to link up with the high-growth economies in Southeast Asia by fostering regional economic cooperation across the Bay of Bengal. In the mid-1980s, India had even attempted to bring Burma into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.[516] While only formalized after 1991, India's "Look East policy" emerged under PM Rajiv Gandhi and increased Burma's strategic importance in Indian assessments, as highlighted by the objectives of the 1987 visit to Rangoon.[517] Reflecting the centrality of such Indian attempts, the last official interactions between both governments before the revolutionary summer of 1988 included bilateral talks on trade and, just two weeks before General Ne Win resigned, the visit of India's Minister of State for Finance.[518]

In New Delhi's assessment, Ne Win had not performed on two key and related strategic objectives: to contain Sino-Burmese rapprochement and to develop a strategic economic link to Southeast Asia. Continued military authoritarianism presented a further obstacle,

---

[515] Lintner, *Great game*, xxiii.

[516] During visit of Burmese FM Chit Hliang, in May 1984, but Burma rejects this: Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 97, fn. S. Devare also recalls Foreign Secretary M. K. Rasgotra's 1982 decision to create a new BSM (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar) division, which he heads, replacing the old "Southern Division" and giving an early organizational expression to the "look East" policy and BIMSTEC initiative: http://www.associationdiplomats.org/publications/ifaj/Vol6/6.3/6.3%20ORAL%20HISTORY.pdf 341.

[517] On the early roots of the Look East Policy, see Amar N. Ram, ed. *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy: Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity* (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 2012), esp. chapters by P. M. S. Malik and S. D. Muni.

[518] Jan.-Feb. 1988: Burmese Trade minister and delegation visited India to follow up on trade talks announced during R. Gandhi's Dec. 1987 visit to Rangoon. Followed in July (11) by the deputy Indian Finance Minister to Yangon: MEA, "FAR 1988," 29.

while democratization promised to deliver on India's external security and economic interests, strengthening its capacity to escape the South Asian regional straightjacket.[519]

*

Recalling the reasons behind India's coercive posture to support pro-democracy forces after the 8-8-88 protests erupted to bloody the streets of Rangoon and its own embassy, a diplomat looking after Burma in India's Ministry of External Affairs at the time, notes that it was an "almost unanimous decision of the system … not a personal whim of Rajiv Gandhi, because [while] we don't sponsor pro-democracy, when it comes up we look favorably to it, that's our natural inclination."[520] This decision was based on a three-fold strategic assessment: 1) Ne Win's regime had been unresponsive to repeated Indian attempts to increase cooperation since the early 1980s, and was seen as isolated and collapsing internally; 2) India's Northeastern insurgents had established safe havens in Northern Burma, but the Burmese Army proved unwilling and incapable of rendering crucial support to India's cross-border counter-insurgency objectives; and 3) Rangoon had engaged in an Sino-Burmese rapprochement from the late 1970s onwards, and Beijing's embrace threatened to accelerate if the regime survived and thus impede Indian plans to transform Burma into a strategic link country with Southeast Asia.

---

[519] This liberal dimension in Indian strategic assessments is discussed in detail in Part II of this dissertation, particularly in Chapter 6.

[520] K. Sahdev (Interview 013). Opposing view, for example, from Vikram Sood, at the time the RAW representative in Rangoon, who recalls getting "angry calls" from the Burmese intelligence service (DDIS) about India's posture, and thus warns New Delhi: 1) "[military] regime will survive, is lonely, needs friends, has more power to damage us than we do them. [Unlike India] West[ern countries] can afford to walk out, Chinese will move in and lock, stock and barrel;" 2) "even if regime democratizes, it will be pro-West, not pro-India, because A. S. Suu Kyi is a Western phenomenon;" and therefore 3) "either we should have the capability to knock them off, which we don't, or deal with them as they are" (Interview 032).

Conclusion

This chapter examined the strategic assessments that drove India's coercive posture during regime crises in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma in the late 1980s: in each case, India denounced the existing political dispensation and supported democratization or liberalization. In Nepal, it facilitated regime change in the Spring of 1990, ending thirty years of royal absolutism. In Sri Lanka, after failed mediation attempts, India coercively intervened with its military, in 1987, to enforce constitutional changes and attempt to solve the ethnic conflict. Finally, in Burma, it sided with, and even assisted pro-democracy forces in their 1988 uprising against continued authoritarian and military rule.

Such proactive involvement has often been interpreted either as an ideological impulse to support the liberalization of neighboring regimes, or as a reflexive hegemonic attempt to consolidate regional predominance by destabilizing and undermining its small neighbor states. Beyond such simplistic explanations, the three case studies examined in this chapter demonstrate that India's coercive postures, favoring regime change, were driven by strategic assessments about how each specific crisis and domestic balance of forces in the neighboring country affected India's domestic and external security priorities.[521] While the broader pattern of these assessments is analyzed in the conclusion of Part 1 of this dissertation, a few tentative conclusions can be drawn from this period, in specific:

1. Security over ideals: India's coercive postures were not reflexively determined by ideological preferences for regime liberalization. Instead, the main motivating assessments

---

[521] Deputy EAM, K. N. Singh, for example, recalls PM R. Gandhi's orders on Nepal and Burma, in mid-1988: "let's put the heat on" (Interview 075). Following the military intervention in Sri lanka, in 1987, this suggests a common approach to all three countries, with India pursuing a coercive mode to compel existing regimes into cooperation, or alternatively make way to change.

focused on decreasing incentives in engaging the existing (illiberal) regimes, which were either weak and isolated or pursuing policies detrimental to India's security.

2. Cost-benefit analysis: In each case, the final (coercive) posture is the outcome of a cost-benefit analysis based on assessments weighing the impact of the specific regime crisis on:

> a) the existing regime's relative strength and attitude towards India (uncooperative in all three cases), and the prospects of an alternative and pliable regime favoring Indian interests (present in Nepal and Burma, absent in Sri Lanka);

> b) the neighboring country's internal stability, especially in case of high levels of political violence (civil war in Sri Lanka, insurgencies in Burma) and possible repercussions on Indian domestic security;

> c) the neighboring country's geostrategic situation and alignment, in particular with regard to China (in the cases of Nepal and Burma) and to the United States and Western countries (in the case of Sri Lanka).

3. Extra-regional adaptation: Despite popular accounts about conflicting Indo-American zones of influence in the subcontinent during the 1980s, the three cases demonstrate that the relationship with the United States across South Asia was stable, as Washington deferred to, or even tacitly supported India's regional primacy and coercive postures.[522] Conversely, building on gradually since the late 1950s, China rose to become the main focus of Indian threat assessments, especially in Nepal and Burma.

---

[522] Howard Schaffer, as U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, in 1988-89, thus recalls: "Our policy in general was not to object to what seemed to many - including me - Indian efforts to create hegemony over the smaller countries of the region. We were mildly interested in what the Indians were doing in their relations with their smaller neighbors." http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Schaffer,%20Howard%20B.toc.pdf pp. 118-19

4. Conflict internationalization: the case of Sri Lanka reflects the importance of the concerned Indian assessment that conflicts in its periphery are prone to undergo rapid internationalization. Competing extra-regional involvement in such conflicts is negatively associated with risk of escalation and with decreased Indian leverage to facilitate or impose conflict resolution.

5. Expectation of privilege: given vulnerable geographic conditions, internal and external security threats, and its open or porous borders, Indian policy-makers expect neighboring regimes to pursue an "India first" policy and to keep privileged channels of communication open, especially during crises periods. India's assessments thus focus on the regime's willingness (intent) and capacity to collaborate with India, or at least address its concerns, which is particularly apparent in the case of Nepal.

6. Illiberal exhaustion and the promises of liberalization: While India's posture was determined by immediate security considerations, the assessments in each case also indicate an Indian concern that illiberal neighboring regimes had exhausted their capacity to foster domestic order and stability and were thus no longer able to deliver to Indian (internal and external) security. Regime liberalization in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma was thus identified positively as contributing to greater order, stability, security and cooperation towards India. This "liberal link" in strategic assessments is addressed in greater detail in Part II of the dissertation, particularly in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4: CALIBRATING ENGAGEMENT AND COERCION (2005-09)

> *The Maoist insurgency in Nepal has seriously disrupted the political equilibrium between constitutional Monarchy and multi party democracy in that country. In Sri Lanka, the peace process is in extreme danger of being derailed by political opportunism and extreme positions. In both these countries, India has been trying to encourage the emergence of corrective impulses, so that political solutions are found, which accord with [India's] long-term national interests.[523]*

B. Mishra, National Security Adviser (2004)

By euphemistically mentioning India's attempts to "encourage the emergence of corrective impulses" in Nepal and in Sri Lanka in the quote above, India's National Security Adviser B. Mishra was, in fact, offering a rare definition of New Delhi's policy of neighborhood involvement, whether through inaction or intervention, engagement or coercion: a strategy to ensure an outcome in which local "political solutions" (regimes) "accord with" (support) India's "long-term national interests" (order and security). While India's leverage in Myanmar was far less than in these two countries, the same approach guided New Delhi's policy and posture towards Yangon.

Building on this approach, the three cases analyzed in this chapter – Nepal's democratic regime change in 2006, Sri Lanka's military offensive and defeat of the Tamil insurgency in 2009, and the failed Burmese pro-democracy uprising in 2007 – offer valuable insights on the strategic nature of Indian crisis assessments because of the variation in posture: 1) in Nepal, India moved towards *full coercion* in 2005, actively facilitating the formation of a regime alternative to the King's direct rule, which succeeded in ending the civil war with

---

[523] At the Munich Security Conference, Feb. 8, 2004: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2004* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2005), 129.

the Maoists; 2) in Sri Lanka, India adopted a posture of *conditional engagement* after 2006, supporting the regime in its military offensive against the LTTE insurgents, in exchange for a special relationship and Colombo's assurances that it would also deliver on the political track to solve the ethnic conflict; and 3) in Myanmar, India pursued all-out *full engagement*, as the bilateral relationship had witnessed an unprecedented expansion and the military regime promised to continue delivering to India's security, economic and geostrategic interests.

While the cases examined in Chapter 2 (1950s-60s) focused on postures that privileged engagement, and the cases in Chapter 3 (1980s) focused conversely on postures that privileged coercion, the three postured examined in this period (2000s) thus diverge (coercion in Nepal, engagement in Sri Lanka and Myanmar). More importantly, there are also puzzling differences with the past: in Myanmar, unlike in 1988, New Delhi pursued engagement in 2007; and in Sri Lanka, unlike in 1987, New Delhi also focused on cooperating and supporting the existing regime.

Such variations offer a perfect background to test the continuity and salience of Indian strategic assessments over any other type of factors (whether regime type or personality), and also to disprove that particular posture types are related to specific historical periods – for example, the temptation to infer that India was inclined to exclusively pursue "idealist" engagement under PM J. Nehru in the late 1950s, and conversely biased towards coercive "hegemonic" strategies under PM R. Gandhi in the 1980s.

1. Nepal 2006

In April 2006, Nepal's King Gyanendra stepped down, paving the way to end 238 years of continued monarchy and ten years of civil war against a Maoist insurgency. This regime change would not have happened without India's involvement, which included targeted pressure on the monarch and secret facilitation of an agreement that brought the political parties and Maoists on a joint opposition platform. Such a coercive posture was the corollary of three strategic assessments: 1) The escalating civil war was spilling over into India, affecting domestic security; 2) The increasingly activist King Gyanendra proved to be non-cooperative by undermining parliamentary democracy, the prospects for conflict resolution, and by taking over direct power in 2005; and 3) In pursuit of a military solution, the monarch's subsequent attempts to rope in Chinese, American or Pakistani assistance signaled a hostile security posture, threatening to further internationalize the conflict.

<div align="center">*</div>

On April 21, 2006, dozens of thousands of Nepalese converged around Kathmandu's Narayanhiti Palace to oppose King Gyanendra's emergency rule and demand a return to multi-party democracy. His security forces had killed over a dozen demonstrators over the previous two weeks, and violence threatened to escalate as Maoist insurgents joined the protests.

Inside the palace, the Indian Prime Minister's special envoy tried to convince the monarch to accept a limited constitutional role, while India's top diplomat warned the Royal Nepalese Army Chief about an impending bloodbath: "if you follow the [royal] order to fire [on the protestors], the King you're trying to protect will be hanging from a

lamp post. Are you His Majesty's army or the army of the people of Nepal?"[524] After

three more days of Indian pressure and violent protests, the king finally stepped down and

transferred power to the political parties.[525] Uncertainty prevailed on the streets: could

the Nepalese state survive without monarchy? Would the Maoists take over and plunge

the country into anarchy, after ten years of civil war?

The alarmed U.S. Ambassador noted that the Maoist objective of a "violent revolution"

in the preceding days had only failed because a providential hailstorm dispersed the

protestors, but that the insurgents were preparing for a "second revolution (ala the

Bolsheviks' October Revolution)."[526] New Delhi, however, seemed nonplussed and

immediately welcomed the King's announcement to step down and hand over power.[527]

Indian officials had good reasons to believe that the Maoists had not been deterred by

meteorological conditions alone and would support a peaceful transition: five months

earlier, in November 2005, the Indian government had secretly facilitated an

understanding between the democratic parties and the Maoists, creating a joint platform

that opposed the King and provided a roadmap for regime change. Set into motion after

the king backed down, this plan led to a historical peace agreement that ended civil war:

[524] Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, who notes that the Nepalese Army Chief P. J. Thapa was initially unwilling, but eventually acquiesced (Interview 028). King Gyanendra's advisor P. Rana says that during their private meeting, the special envoy (Karan Singh) gave the monarch a sealed enveloped whose contents remain unknown but allegedly included assurances about his safety (Interview 050). Indian Army Chief J. J. Singh recalls calling his counterpart with "friendly advice" to emulate the Indian Army: "to further the duly elected government as per the constitution, remain neutral, apolitical and professional," and thus avoid confrontation with the Maoists, who were "focused only on removing the King" (Interview 045).

[525] http://un.org.np/unmin-archive/downloads/keydocs/2006-04-24-Proclaimation_of_HM_King.pdf

[526] Amb. Moriarty, May 19: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KATHMANDU1287_a.html

[527] Apr. 24: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2006* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2007), 757.

the insurgents agreed to disarm, joined multi-party democracy, and then proceeded to win the country's first-ever elections for a Constituent Assembly.[528]

Why did India adopt a coercive posture towards King Gyanendra, facilitating regime change in 2006? Since 2001, different individuals and organizations had disagreed in New Delhi on how best to implement India's Nepal policy, but based on three assessments, in 2006 they converged to the necessity to compel Kathmandu into change.

Neighbor on fire: the spillover effects of an escalating civil war

> *[the] growing influence and grip of Maoists throughout [Nepal], particularly in the Terai areas bordering India, and their links with left extremist outfits in parts of India, are a cause of serious concern.[529]*

> Indian Ministry of Defence, Annual Report 2003-04.

At the root of all Indian assessments was the threat of a rising Maoist insurgency engulfing the neighboring kingdom in a protracted civil war and affecting India's domestic security, especially through left-wing extremist links across the border.

Nepal's Maoist insurgency had begun in 1996, and after an initial phase of limited guerilla-warfare, it developed into a full-blown insurgency to control more than half the country and to severely expose the Royal Nepalese Army's fighting capability.[530] In

---

[528] Results of April 2008 elections for a Constituent Assembly: CPN-Maoist (220), Nepali Congress, (110), and CPN-UML (103), which India's EAM welcomes as a "success": Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 1253 fn1. On May 28, Nepal is declared a republic and on Aug. 15 former Maoist insurgent leader "Prachanda" is elected Prime Minister.

[529] Quoted from the Indian Ministry of Defence, 2003-04 annual report, in Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 362.

[530] The Maoists began their insurgency with a first attack on a police post, on Feb. 13, 1996. On their rise up to 2005, see Aditya Adhikari, *The bullet and the ballot box: the story of Nepal's Maoist revolution* (New York: Verso, 2014); Ashok K. Mehta, *The Royal Nepal Army: meeting the Maoist challenge* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2005); Prashant Jha, *Battles of the new republic: A contemporary history of Nepal* (New Delhi: Aleph, 2014), 1-157.

November 2001, a few months after taking over power from his assassinated brother, King Gyanendra declared a nation-wide emergency and promised military victory by modernizing the armed forces.[531] Over the next five years, the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) doubled in size to 90,000 men and the government's military expenditure trebled. As the war escalated after 2002, the average annual death toll spiraled from less than 100 to almost 5,000, and the conflict expanded to all but two of the country's 75 districts.[532] India's threat assessments therefore increased, no longer seeing the conflict as a mere "irritant" to Nepal's domestic order, nor restricted to the police domain.[533] Three specific domestic security concerns informed this strategic assessment.

First, the Maoists identified the Indian government as Nepal's main external enemy, accusing it of supporting the interests of the "feudal" monarchy or the "bourgeois" political parties. Their revolutionary pursuit to take over power threatened to create either a hostile regime or a protracted civil war, both of which could spill over across the open border of 1,900 km.[534] The Maoists found particular support among Nepal's Indian-origin population in the lowland Terai region, which shared strong ethno-linguistic bonds with the Indian border states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.[535]

---

[531] Declared on Nov. 23, after the Maoists launch coordinated attacks in 42 districts. The government approves the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (Prevention and Control) Act and creates a Unified Command to pool military, police and intelligence resources to go on the offensive.

[532] Sebastian von Einsiedel et al., eds., *Nepal in transition: from people's war to fragile peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 20-21. Mehta, *Royal Nepal Army*, xviii.

[533] Jha, *Battles*, 82-5.

[534] Jha, *Battles*, 17-24. In early 2002, India became the world's first country to deem the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M) a terrorist organization.

[535] For a background on these cross-border links, see Frederick H. Gaige, *Regionalism and national unity in Nepal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). India also hosts several million of Nepalese, including around 40,000 Gorkhas serving in the Indian Army, half of which are Nepalese citizens, in 41 different battalions. An estimated 150,000 have retired in Nepal: Mehta, *Royal Nepal Army*, 4-5.

Despite a change in government, in May 2004, the Indian government's chief concern about the Nepalese insurgency persisted unaltered. Speaking in 2003, External Affair Minister Y. Sinha emphasized such concern: "we cannot say that we are apathetic to whatever is happening in Nepal [because] we still have, an open border (…) and if we remember that we are two of the closest neighbours, then our security interests are bound to converge."[536] Exactly a year later, his successor K. N. Singh, echoed such warnings, emphasizing that the "grave challenge posed by [the] Maoist insurgency [in Nepal], is also a threat to India's security."[537]

Second, after 2002, the Nepalese Maoist leadership started to settle permanently in India.[538] This allowed the insurgents to create safe zones from RNA offensives and develop an underground network for financing and arms acquisitions.[539] Several Maoist leaders were thus arrested by Indian authorities and deported to Nepal, and in 2003 both countries reached a bilateral extradition agreement.[540]

When King Gyanendra declared emergency rule, in 2005, Nepal's instability further threatened to spillover, with also a rising number of refugees from the political parties

---

[536] Dec. 12: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2003* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2004), 429, 31. India's ambassador to Nepal, S. Saran, quotes Defence Minister G. Fernandes: "the fight against the Maoists is also India's fight." https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU2366_a.html

[537] Dec. 22, in parliament: Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 423.

[538] Mostly in the states of Bihar and West Bengal, but their network allowed them to circulate across the country, including in New Delhi, and even abroad: Jha, *Battles*, 29; Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 1152.

[539] Dec. 2003, EAM Y. Sinha in response to reports about a meeting in India between CPN-UML General Secretary, M. K. Nepal, and Maoist leader Prachanda: "We feel embarrassed … [but] for somebody from Nepal to sneak into India, or for the Maoist leaders to operate from bases in India are two entirely different things. (…) India provides no sanctuary to these elements from Nepal. Whenever we have had information, we have not only arrested these people, we have even repatriated them to Nepal or we have held them in prison in India." Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 436.

[540] Arrests begin in Feb. 2002: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/02KATHMANDU1408_a.html. Indian Ambassador to Nepal, S. Saran, notes that in response to Maoists complaints about the arrests, the Indian government had passed on the message that "if you break the law in India you will get arrested": https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU427_a.html Arrests in include C. P. Gajurel (Aug. 2003) and M. Vaidya "Kiran" (March 2004). After Sept. 2003, increased security cooperation with a new RNA-IB hotline: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU1870_a.html

joining the Maoists in exile in India.[541] One day after the coup, the Indian government thus expressed concern that "any increase in violence in Nepal will have its fall out in India. It has already had a fall out in India in terms of the very large exodus of ordinary Nepalis escaping violence and economic deprivation from Nepal. So, it stands to reason that if there is intensification of violence in the country it will have its impact on India."[542]

Finally, and of greatest concern, were Nepal's Maoist links with Indian left-wing extremists, including organizational cooperation and coordination on logistics and weapon supplies.[543] Rejecting Nepalese allegations that India was supporting and training the Maoist insurgents, the Minister of External Affairs, in 2003, intuitively underlined that "if we were to encourage the Nepalese Maoists, then we would be encouraging the the PWG and the MCC [Maoist insurgents] in India."[544] The possibility of a "Compact Revolutionary Zone" linking Nepal to Southern India through a "red corridor" of Maoist insurgents thus emerged as one of India's main security concerns.[545]

The National Security Adviser after 2004-05, M. K. Narayanan, recalls:

> *Clearly, the [Nepalese] Maoists we had problems with, there were strong connections on our side with [the] red corridor. (…) Maoists in India and Nepal were extremely close. Point is not about*

---

[541] March 2, deputy EAM Ahmed: "several Nepalese citizens, including political leaders, have crossed over to India following the imposition of emergency in the country." In late March, the SSB (Armed Border Police) registered a rise in infiltrations and detention of Maoists and called for new border identification system. In June, Home Minister S. Patil notes that refugee inflows from Nepal duplicated since the coup: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2005* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2006), 504, 08-11.

[542] MEA statement Feb. 2, 2005: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 494.

[543] This leads to the creation of the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia, in 2001, whose founding statement vows to "condemn the servile role of the reactionary governments of this region, including India, (…) who dance to the tune of U.S. imperialism in the name of countering terrorism." http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/southasia/documents/papers/CCOMPOSA.htm. Various Indian officials mentioned the CPN-M imported weapons from India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

[544] Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 436.

[545] L. K. Advani, Home Minister until 2004, referred to the "well-known link between the Maoist insurgents in Nepal and Naxal outfits in India," calling them "twin brothers" L. K. Advani, *My country my life* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2008), 738-39.

[whether they cooperated operationally on] blowing up bridges etc. (…) Maoists were certainly not promising [for India in the] long-term because we [in the Intelligence Bureau] know their thought process and ideas. I don't mind dealing with Maoists in Fiji, but in Nepal [we were] not prepared. We didn't see it as to our advantage to have a Maoist regime in Nepal [because] it would have repercussions on India, [through] links, red corridor, and arms supplies.[546]

Despite differences about the intensity of this threat, all organizations consensually agreed on the assessment of a protracted Maoist insurgency in Nepal as a liability for India's domestic security.[547] These concerns were particularly strong in the Intelligence Bureau, which focused on the domestic security angle. Even in late 2006, when the Maoists had agreed to lay down their weapons, the former IB director A. Doval cautioned India not to lower its guard:

The CPN (Maoists) becoming equity shareholders in Nepal's new power dispensation also has implications for India's internal security particularly in view of their known linkages with Indian Left Wing Extremists. … [CPN-M may be using parties tactically to get rid of monarchy, so once] the monarchy is out and only two power centers are left in Nepal, the Maoists may not remain an easy commodity for the political parties to deal with. A new power struggle may ensue in which Maoists may display greater stridency and possibly revival of its revolutionary agenda.[548]

New Delhi's 2002 decision to respond to a secret Maoist outreach effort to PM A. B. Vajpayee and establish a channel of communication with the insurgents was therefore *because* of, and not *despite* this threat, as sometimes erroneously argued.[549] India had to be prepared for any scenario in Nepal, and this also required an open link to monitor and

---

[546] Interview 077.

[547] The MEA articulated this concern cogently: "[The] growth of Maoist insurgency in Nepal is a matter of serous concern to India because of its adverse fall-out for India due to the open and unregulated border as well as the links between Nepal's Maoists and the Indian Naxalite groups," MEA, "Annual Report 2004-05," (New Delhi 2005), 14.

[548] He retired in Jan. 2005: http://ajitdoval.blogspot.com/2008/09/intelligence-in-indias-internal.html

[549] Channel established under National Security Adviser B. Mishra, in mid-2002, and then facilitated by the external intelligence agency RAW: Jha, *Battles*, 90; S. D. Muni, "Bringing the Maoists down the Hills: India's role," in *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace.*, ed. Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone, and Suman Pradhan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). In 2003, Mishra acknowledged this channel in interactions with Nepalese officials such as Defence Minister B. B. Thapa and King Birendra's adviser P. Rana, to signal that the Indian government was keeping all options open (Interviews 038 and 050). See also Nov. 2003 discussion between Indian and American ambassadors in Nepal: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU2366_a.html.

assess whether the Maoists were amenable to being mainstreamed and co-opted into a liberal democracy.

Royal overreach: King Gyanendra's non-cooperation on conflict resolution

The second, and also most important assessment driving India's coercive approach in 2005-06 related to King Gyanendra's non-cooperative attitude: his increasing political activism and military strategy clashed with New Delhi's focus on the importance of the democratic parties and political inducements to end the civil war.

India's cardinal objective to promote order in Nepal was seen to be contingent on preserving both the monarchy and the political parties as the country's two inter-dependent foundations. Speaking to the parliament in late 2004, PM M. Singh thus reiterated that India would continue its "traditional policy of support for multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy as the twin pillars of the Nepalese Constitution."[550] The "twin pillars" had been the bedrock of India's Nepal policy since the early 1990s. [551]

In other words, New Delhi would support constitutional monarchy and provide military assistance to pressure the insurgents, as long as King Gyanendra also delivered to strengthen multi-party democracy as an incentive for the Maoists to agree to a negotiated settlement.[552] Indian decision-makers sometimes differed on how best to calibrate such

---

[550] Dec. 21: Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 414.

[551] For its applicability in the late 1990s: Krishna V. Rajan, "Darkness at noon," in *The Ambassadors' club: the Indian diplomat at large*, ed. Krishna V. Rajan (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012). For a similar definition of the "twin pillars" principle, by President A. P. J. Kalam, see Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 89.

[552] Interviews 026, 028 and 075, respectively with S. Saran (Indian Ambassador to Nepal until 2004, Foreign Secretary thereafter), R. Rae (JS for Nepal in 2004-05), and K. N. Singh (EAM 2004-5).

military pressure and political inducements.[553] But they agreed consensually both on the pivotal importance and the objectives of this dual strategy: any deviation from it would strengthen the Maoist insurgency, weaken Nepal's domestic order, impinge on India's security, and therefore require revising support for the royal regime.[554] This was India's only red line, but the monarch kept dangerously approaching it by pursuing an activist role after 2001, which set off repeated alarms in New Delhi.[555]

First, King Gyanendra played off different political parties and factions against each other, thus not only maximizing his own power and reducing the prospects for legitimate governments, but also feeding the Maoist rhetoric about the unsustainability of parliamentary democracy.[556] India's discontent thus gradually rose after the monarch dissolved the elected parliament in 2002.[557]

---

[553] According to various interviewees, two broad approaches: 1) MEA, RAW, and liberal political parties and activists committed to actively pushing for an alternative and a possible regime change with the Maoists, and 2) the IB, conservative political leaders and ministers, and sectors of the Indian Army favouring stability under continued royal rule. PM M. Singh seemed to fall somewhere in the middle, but gradually shifted towards the first approach in early 2005.

[554] E. g. as early as June 2002, on the occasion of King Gyanendra's visit to New Delhi, "PM Vajpayee made it clear that India would support any and all measures to deal with the insurgency as long as two elements remained: the constitutional monarchy and a multi-party system." https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/02KATHMANDU1314_a.html. This is also the account of Nepalese ambassador to India at the time, B. B. Thapa, who recalls that Indians drew their red lines very clearly behind closed doors (Interview 038).

[555] As noted by the Indian ambassador at the time of his enthronement, in 2001, India's diplomats were already predisposed to being "cagey" about King Gyanendra he was the "baby king" crowned by the Ranas in the 1950-51 crisis, and as head of the Palace's intelligence, he had taken on a hostile approach towards India in 1988, during the crisis with Chinese weapon imports. (D. Mukharji: Interview 056, see also Singh, *Walking*, 122-23. For an alternative view, see: http://www.rediff.com/news/2001/jun/11inter.htm.

[556] For example, in 2002, King Gyanendra instigated a rift in Nepal's main political party – also the one seen as more friendly towards India – by appointing a Prime Minister form his favorite faction. The NC rift between G. P. Koirala and S. B. Deuba had happened in 2001, over the continuation of emergency to fight the Maoists, leading the latter to form a new party: Nepali Congress (Democratic). This concerned India, as it weakened the prospects of a stable government to find a conflict resolution mechanism for the Maoists: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/02KATHMANDU575_a.html

[557] On May 22, 2002, Gyanendra dissolved the Parliament and called for elections in November. In October, however, to India's surprise he dismissed the interim government and postponed elections

Second, in August 2003, it also became clear that the monarch was not committed to a party-led peace process after he deployed the RNA to end a cease-fire and scuttle an imminent agreement negotiated by Nepalese PM S. B. Thapa. [558] Of even greater concern was the monarch's decision to indefinitely postpone parliamentary elections and appoint or dismiss interim governments at his prerogative. [559]

Finally, by late 2004 it became clear to New Delhi that the military conflict had evolved into a stalemate, and that "if the Maoists are not strong enough yet to take on the RNA neither is the RNA in any position to wipe out the Maoists."[560] The insurgents had thus returned to guerilla tactics and economic blockades to achieve maximum disruption.[561] To India, this further demonstrated the RNA's incapacity to achieve success in its counter-insurgency mission.[562] So when King Gyanendra announced a new military offensive in 2004, India conditioned its assistance on his ability to simultaneously deliver on the political front, for example by holding parliamentary elections.[563]

---

indefinitely: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/02KATHMANDU1964_a.html   and
https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU552_a.html

[558] B. B. Thapa, who served as a minister at the time, recalls 2003 as a tipping point, as it became apparent that King Gyanendra was undermining attempts to build a string government or reinstitute parliament. In a friendly overture towards India, he appointed S. B. Thapa as PM, but as soon as the government began to show initiative by exploring a cease-fire with the Maoists (January 2003) to further the peace process, in June, he undermined it launching an RNA offensive in August: "He was … relying only on RNA inputs while the civilian government was only for [public and international] show," (Interview 038). Indian reaction by NSA B. Mishra, on Nov. 24: "[the RNA offensive] has upset the equilibrium between constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy in Nepal," Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 362.

[559] See EAM Y. Sinha in a press interview, Dec. 12, 2003: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 428-9.

[560] V. Sood, former director of India's external intelligence agency, RAW, in May 2005: http://soodvikram.blogspot.com/2007/05/handle-with-care.html

[561] Jha, *Battles*, 58-62; Mehta, *Royal Nepal Army*, 21-4.

[562] Some of the problems Indians identified in the RNA include: a) its ceremonial profile and lack of combat experience; b) excessive focus on conventional UN peacekeeping operations, hardly any experience in domestic counterinsurgency; c) absence of regimental system, and overlapping military/policing functions; d) unaccountable to government, responsible only towards the King: Mehta, *Royal Nepal Army*, ix-x.

[563] In Apr. 2004, for example, India's Ambassador S. Saran and his American and British counterparts tried   to   persuade   Gyanendra   to   initiate   a   secret   outreach   to   the   political   parties:

New Delhi's assessment was that a purely military strategy was bound to fail and required a complementary political track to bring the parties on board and lure the Maoists into dialogue.[564] Throughout 2004, this message was urgently and publically conveyed to Kathmandu, beckoning the monarch to reactivate the democratic process. In September, the Foreign Secretary thus emphasized that "any pursuit of a peace settlement must be within the parameters of the preservation of multiparty democracy in Nepal and also within the parameters of Constitutional Monarchy."[565] While the former "parameter" was a signal to the king, the later one was directed at the Maoists.[566]

As time passed, New Delhi's concerned suggestions quickly morphed into prescriptions, pushing the monarch to engage the political parties and the Maoists to reach a "political settlement" and end the civil war.[567]King Gyanendra, however, did exactly the opposite, delivering the final death blow to Nepal's crumbling constitutional monarchy on February 1st, 2005, when he assumed direct control of government, detained party

---

https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04KATHMANDU692_a.html. India pressed for "mutual understanding and cooperation between all the constitutional forces in the country in particular between the institution of Constitutional Monarchy and the political parties," Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 582.

[564] Jul05 outgoing AMB Saran to US AMB: "complete military victory over the Maoists was not possible … Until the Maoists were forced to realize they could not win, they would not be willing to make any meaningful concessions. Maintaining military pressure on the Maoists and avoiding political factionalization --that could give the Maoists something to exploit -- was critical". https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04KATHMANDU1319_a.html

[565] Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 612.

[566] Speaking to parliament on Dec. 22, the EAM K. N. Singh emphasized: "we have started efforts to bring all political parties together on a national platform, and, on the other, encourage the monarchy and the political parties to work together" even while extending "all possible assistance to the Royal Nepalese Army and security forces in Nepal in order to raise their capabilities in dealing with the complexities of counter-insurgency warfare" … "our determination and resolve to safeguard India's interest and at the same time support Nepal to preserve multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy" Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 423-4.

[567] See e.g. Foreign Secretary S. Saran's statement in September "a political settlement in which the Maoists are ready to come in as a legitimate political entity, abandon violence, take part in a free and fair elections, that is something which we believe perhaps the people of Nepal [and India] would welcome." Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 613. As recalled by P. Rana, one of Gyanendra's key advisers, the King had two options: a) reach out to the political parties to revive the parliamentary process, or b) deal with the Maoists directly, in political or military terms. India's advice was to opt for a) and then proceed to b), but the fact that Gyanendra took over power instead, on Feb. 1, 2005, shows that he "was not weighing the consequences" (Interview 050).

leaders under emergency provisions, and announced a three-year moratorium on elections.[568] For New Delhi, this was "a serious setback to the cause of democracy in Nepal [and] a cause of grave concern to India."[569]

Over the following days, the Indian government took severe measures to express its discontent.[570] Policy differences emerged on how hard India should take on the King, the Minister of External Affairs, for example, cautiously reassuring Kathmandu that India had "infinite patience".[571] But having irreversibly crossed India's only red line, and obstinately persisting in his view that "they [India] must say what they must say, and we [Nepal] must do what we must do", King Gyanendra gradually lost all remaining support in New Delhi over the following months.[572]

A tipping point has been reached: by boxing himself into a corner, the King activated India's coercive mode, forcing it to consider an alternative constellation of power in

---

[568] See http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/50218/nepalnews0406_2.pdf. P. Rana says India "may have known" about the King's plan, but did not give permission: "consultation does not mean green light" (Interview 050). R. Rae, at the time in charge of Nepal at the MEA, says Gyanendra felt confident because "he may have pinged parts of GoI but got bad advice," (Interview 026).

[569] Feb. 1 statement, see also Feb. 2 statement: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 487-88, 90.

[570] On Feb. 2, India cancelled its participation, and thus forced postponement of the SAARC summit scheduled for Feb. 5-6 in Bangladesh. On Feb. 3, the new Indian Army chief cancelled his customary visit to Nepal after taking charge. On Feb. 9 the meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Security Group is cancelled, and all military assistance suspended. On Feb. 13, the government recalled its ambassador: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 345. See also http://nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=2594, and Muni, "Bringing the Maoists," 323.

[571] Apr. 8, 2005, interview to the media: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 55. As Foreign Secretary at the time, S. Saran recalls that "some people [were] not comfortable with [our] pressure on King [Gyanendra], including old royalists [and] some in the security establishment." (Interview 028), see also https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU2366_a.html.

[572] National Security Adviser M. K. Narayanan: "[the King] shot himself in the foot, so we had to abandon him." (Interview 077). EAM K. N. Singh: "before, we kept asking ourselves, 'what's the substitute for this chap?'" but the fact that "he dealt so badly with the situation, misled by advisers and courtiers", forced India to "consider alternatives." He had "poor leadership" skills, and the coup was "foolish," because India had warned him against it but "he didn't listen" (Interview 075). On organizational differences, the Indian ambassador S. Mukherjee recalls: "[the] King's take-over resolved all internal differences" (Interview 056).

Kathmandu that could end the civil war and deliver to its security interests.[573] In May, 2005 the former director of India's external intelligence agency thus predicted that "the Maoists will have to be brought to the negotiating table and they will eventually accept a constitutional role."[574] In subsequent months, India thus facilitated rapprochement and served as an external guarantor to an agreement reached in New Delhi between the political parties and the Maoists, without (and against) the King, which paved the way for the April 2006 regime change.[575]

Beyond ideological proclivity or naïve trust, India was willing to work *with*, and not merely against the Maoists, because it identified a unique window of opportunity to reach a peace agreement, based on three assessments about the insurgents: 1) they had reached out to New Delhi, in 2002, promising not to take any hostile posture towards India; [576] 2) they had also engaged the political parties in Kathmandu, in a series of secret talks;[577] and 3) their internal balance of forces favored the gradual emergence of a moderate current, seeking reform and inclusion into parliamentary politics.[578]

---

[573] In the words of an Indian official, the coup was a "turning point … [because] we realized [that] convincing the King was not going to work. Instead of the Maoists being the main problem, we realized the king was the main problem. He had dug himself in a deeper hole" quoted in Jha, *Battles*, 97.

[574] V. Sood: http://soodvikram.blogspot.com/2007/05/handle-with-care.html.

[575] On India's role in facilitating the agreements, see Jha, *Battles*, 85, 95-102. For a Maoist account on India's role in the agreement, by its chief ideologue B. Bhattarai, see Tripathi, *Nepal in transition*. India's role and motivations are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

[576] Reaching out to the Indian PM via NSA B. Mishra, in 2002, the CPN-M "assured the Indian leaders that they wanted the best of relations with India and would not do anything to harm its critical interests". Muni, "Bringing the Maoists," 320-1. A RAW official recalls 2005-06: "[the] real surprise was Prachanda … [who] was a mysterious type of figure. But we found him to be very balanced; he seemed to be a man of vision. And that was the tilting factor for us," quoted in Jha, *Battles*, 67.

[577] The Maoists started a secret outreach to various political parties after 2002, a channel that accelerated after the Seven Party Alliance was formed to oppose the King: Jha, *Battles*, 51-2. CPN-UML leader M. K. Nepal recalls a series of eight meetings just in 2005 as a confidence-building measure facilitated by the Indian government, which lead to the 12-Point Understanding of Nov. 2005 (Interview 054).

[578] The CPN-M was torn between its Chairman Prachanda, more inclined towards continuation of the armed insurgency, and its chief ideologue B. Bhattarai who favored peace talks and political integration.

By taking initiative to facilitate the possibility of an alternative regime in Kathmandu, in 2005, New Delhi also increased its leverage over King Gyanendra to either perform or risk losing power.[579] However, as violence took over the streets of Kathmandu in the spring of 2006, it soon became apparent that the institution of monarchy had become the weakest, and therefore also the most dispensable link in Nepal's triangular stalemate.[580]

Internationalizing conflict: Kathmandu's desperate balancing games

A final assessment leading India to embrace regime change in Nepal related to the risks of the conflict internationalizing, driven by King Gyanendra's eleventh-hour attempts to escape Indian pressure by developing extra-regional links with China, the United States and even Pakistan.

With civil war escalating after 2001, New Delhi's concern about possible encroachment by external actors such as China heightened, and it warned Kathmandu that it would not tolerate any third-party involvement.[581] The main threat assessment, however, related to Nepal's military modernization and the risk of competing American, Chinese and other

---

The latter prevailed after Apr. 2005 as the Maoists commited "to democracy instead of orthodox capture of state and primary anti-Indianism": Jha, *Battles*, 51-2, 94. See also Adhikari, *Bullet and ballot*, 151-81, 205

[579] U.S. Ambassador's notes on meeting the Indian Foreign Secretary S. Saran, Dec. 2005, in Katmandu, who reports to have passed on the Indian PM's message that "the King had to move, and fast, to reconcile with the political parties," and that "monarchy would [not] survive unless the King acted," because the "Maoists and political parties had gone too far with each other to break apart easily": https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05KATHMANDU2793_a.html. See also similar points made by Amb. S. Mukherjee: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KATHMANDU138_a.html and https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KATHMANDU566_a.html.

[580] Former Indian ambassador to Nepal, D. Mukharji, describes India's 2005 coercive policy as a corollary to prior assessments of Kathmandu being torn between three power poles (the King, the parties and the insurgents), and that this would persist "until any two joined forces to terminate the third." (Interview 056).

[581] In March 2003, for example, Gyanendra's adviser P. Rana recalls NSA B. Mishra warning him that the Indian government would "absolutely would not tolerate any involvement of third parties, either as facilitators or mediators," https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03KATHMANDU552_a.html

suppliers reducing India's leverage over Gyanendra to perform on the political front.[582] The RNA had to be strengthened, but only up to the point of a stalemate that compelled the insurgents to pursue a settlement under Indian supervision.

However, Gyanendra's post-2005 attempts to secure extra-regional assistance indicated his unwillingness to abide by this strategy and, instead, his plans to launch a military offensive while keeping democracy in suspension. With the United States, for example, the Nepalese Foreign Minister R. N. Pandey accused India of training the Maoist insurgents and threatened with Nepal's rising reliance on China.[583] While he professed Nepal's interest in a "special, very close relationship with the U.S.," Washington refused assistance and kept pressuring the King to deliver on reinstituting democracy.[584]

Similarly, building on a gradual expansion of Sino-Nepalese relations since the early 2000s, Kathmandu played the China card to balance Indian pressure.[585] Less than two months after the royal coup of 2005, the Chinese Foreign Minister thus became the first high-level foreign official to visit Nepal, Beijing, which was seen as a clear indication of support for King Gyanendra.[586] As the bilateral crisis with India escalated throughout the

---

[582] See e.g. in May 2004, EAM K. N. Singh: "The situation there [Nepal] is frightening for them as well as for us. [If its not solved], others will come and intervene," Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 172. On Indian fears of about competing American and Chinese involvement in the conflict, see Muni, "Bringing the Maoists," 320.

[583] See https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KATHMANDU409_a.html. Pandey also expressed Nepal's opposition to India's bid to join the UNSC as a permanent member, and suggests that India was training Maoists: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05KATHMANDU1267_a.html. Pandey also alluded to India's 1975 annexation of Sikkim: "calling for a constituent assembly is a way to achieve the Sikkimization of Nepal," https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05KATHMANDU2565_a.html

[584] Dec. 15, 2005: FM Pandey says the United States took a "wrong" policy of pressure, instead of engagement: https://archive.org/stream/05KATHMANDU2811/05KATHMANDU2811_djvu.txt

[585] Just ten days before the coup, in a possible quid pro quo, the Nepalese government had shut the Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office in Kathmandu and imposed more restrictions on Tibetan refugees: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 3338.

[586] The visit of China's FM Li Zhaoxing began on March 31, and the official statement makes no reference to the domestic situation: http://wcm.fmprc.gov.cn/pub/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/xwlb/t190201.htm. Nepalese FM R. N. Pandey visited China in August, followed by RNA Chief P. J. Thapa in October, but were not able to get extra support: http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lang=en&id=107734.

year, however, Beijing rebuffed Kathmandu's requests for greater involvement to counter-balance New Delhi's pressure.[587]

Finally, King Gyanendra courted Pakistan in a desperate attempt to circumvent Indian and American pressures.[588] At the regional SAARC summit in late 2005, India's Foreign Secretary S. Saran thus recalls Kathmandu as "[being] very nasty, opposing every Indian move, playing games, and working with Pakistan to prevent Afghanistan from joining [the organization], and proposing China instead."[589]

Given the limited success of these balancing strategies, New Delhi was concerned but not alarmed. Despite tactical differences on arms supplies and on the utility of negotiation with the Maoists, India and the United States had developed a firm dialogue on the common strategic objective to ensure stability in Nepal.[590] Similarly, New Delhi and Beijing kept communication channels open, and their positions broadly converged.[591]

---

[587] The RNA chief P. J. Thapa recalls his 2005 visit to Beijing: "China always insisted in a peaceful Nepal in a stable South Asia and that we should look towards India first. They focused on economic connectivity, but as long as no anti-China activities in Nepal and the monarchy survived, it let India to have free hand" (Interview 007). A Feb. 2005 U.S. Embassy cable notes that "over the course of the past year the PRC has moved from stressing the importance of support for the King to saying that it is in contact with opposition parties to now saying that the Gyanendra is just 'one of many forces' in Nepal," https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06BEIJING2778_a.html.

[588] Aug. 2005, FM R. N. Pandey visited Pakistan, followed by RNA Chief P. J. Thapa in December. On Pakistan as an alternative: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05KATHMANDU2811_a.html

[589] (Interview 028). For the official Indian reaction: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 419.

[590] In 2004, PM M. Singh noted that the United States "supported India's approach" in Nepal: Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 1178. S. Saran recalls: "[the] Americans [were] not always happy about Indian outreach to Maoists, but allowed us to take a lead … [U.S. Ambassador] Moriarty may have had occasional reservations, but [Washington] DC trusted our judgment" (Interview 028).

[591] Amb. S. Mukherjee refers to an agreement "to coordinate and share information" about Nepal: http://nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=2594. Nepal was also discussed during March visit of Foreign Secretary S. Saran to Beijing: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 512; Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 3360-64. See also https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05KATHMANDU2389_a.html.

Indirectly, however, Nepalese attempts to internationalize the conflict backfired because, to New Delhi, they signaled balancing as a belligerent strategy.[592]

However limited in its success, Kathmandu's 2005 shift from non-cooperation to open defiance threatened to reduce Indian leverage, prolong the window of uncertainty in bilateral relations, and reduce incentives for the Maoists to disarm. This final assessment, about Nepal's hostile foreign policy after 2005, thus confirmed New Delhi's long-held suspicion that King Gyanendra was not only an immediate obstacle to conflict resolution, but also a long-term liability for India's security interests.

*

Reacting to the King's emergency rule in 2005, Vikram Sood, a former director of India's external intelligence organization, had cautioned that "it is less important if Nepal is ruled by an absolute monarch, a constitutional monarch, a parliamentary democracy or a [Maoist] peoples' democracy so long as it has India's security interests in mind."[593] Such "security interests" were reflected in three assessments: 1) the escalating civil was spilling over to affect India's domestic security; 2) King Gyanendra failed to pursue New Delhi's two-track approach to the insurgents, complementing military pressure with a strong democratic process as a political inducement; and 3) Kathmandu started to balance and threaten India's regional security influence by seeking assistance from third parties, internationalizing the conflict. India's coercive approach in 2005-2006 to facilitate regime change was therefore, above all, a targeted response to remind Kathmandu of its security interests. Failing to respond, Gyanendra's royal overestimation – about the RNA's

---

[592] An Indian government official reflects this: "[it] really irritated us. Here was someone who had trampled on democracy, deepened the conflict in his own country. And now, he was playing strategic games that directly impinged our interests," quoted in Jha, *Battles*, 101.

[593] http://soodvikram.blogspot.com/2007/05/handle-with-care.html

capability to achieve a military victory, about his political support within the Government of India, about Beijing or Washington's willingness to support him, and about the differences between the democratic parties and the Maoist insurgents – eventually proved fatal to his regime.

3. Sri Lanka 2009

Unlike in 1987, in 2009 India supported the Sri Lankan government's successful military offensive against the Tamil insurgents, which ended almost three decades of civil war. Colombo would not have succeeded without New Delhi's assistance, which was based on a triple strategic assessment inducing its cooperative posture: 1) President Mahinda Rajapaksa pursued a risky military offensive but continuously engaged and reassured India, both on security and political issues, and promised to deliver on the political track to solve the ethnic conflict; 2) Conversely, the LTTE's intransigent separatism threatened to prolong the conflict and spillover to affect India's domestic security, and 3) India's geopolitical predominance required insulating the Sri Lankan government from extra-regional influence, mitigating Colombo's strategic reliance on China, on the one hand, and protecting it from Western liberal-interventionist pressures, on the other hand.

*

On the morning of May 19th, 2009, the body of T. V. Prabhakaran was found floating in a bloody ditch near Nanthi Kadal, a sweet-water lagoon in Northeast Sri Lanka. Under his leadership, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had thrived as one of the world's most powerful insurgent groups, controlling up to a third of the island in their

222

quest for a separate Tamil state. On that day, however, the Tigers and their iconic leader succumbed to the fire of the Sri Lankan Army, marking the end of a war that had killed almost 100,000 people since the 1980s.[594] President M. Rajapaksa thus declared "victory" and the country to be "completely freed from the clutches of separatist terrorism."[595]

While many Western capitals were still drafting condemnatory statements or UN resolutions calling for inquiries into possible human rights abuses by the Sri Lankan Army, less than 48 hours after the last rounds of fire had been shot, India's National Security Adviser M. K. Narayanan and Foreign Secretary S. S. Menon arrived in Colombo to congratulate President Rajapaksa. New Delhi's first statements were cautious, reiterating the need to address the "root causes" of the ethnic conflict by pursuing a political process to integrate the Tamil minority.[596] But when the two envoys and President Rajapaksa emerged from their meting shaking hands and smiling, India's immediate focus was apparent: it would continue to privilege engagement and cooperation.[597]

Indeed, the Sri Lankan government would not have won the war without India's support: unlike in 1987, this time New Delhi not only refrained from taking any action against the military offensive on the LTTE, but even rendered crucial assistance. During the preceding years, India had expanded defense cooperation and ended a weapons

---

[594] Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka, 2012: http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf

[595] Speaking before Parliament, partially in Tamil: http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20090519_04

[596] On May 23, EAM S. M. Krishna: "With the conventional conflict in Sri Lanka coming to an end, this is the moment when the root causes of conflict in Sri Lanka can be addressed." Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2009* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2010), 123.

[597] After the May 21 meeting, NSA S. S. Menon emphasized: "we have to let emotions die down first." http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/Lanka+to+give+India+LTTE+chief's+death+certificate/1/43205.html. Various Indian government officials involved recalls that the overall focus was on engagement.

embargo, offering ships, helicopters, radars and ammunition.[598] The Indian Navy gave operational support and intelligence that helped destroy the LTTE's "floating weapons warehouses," cutting the insurgents' off their key oceanic weapon supply routes.[599] Thousands of Sri Lankan military personnel, including hundreds of officers, received training in India throughout the final phase of the war.[600] On the diplomatic front, India helped Sri Lanka to fend off international pressure, especially at the United Nations.[601] The Indian government kept much of this support secret, conditioned by liberal and domestic factors, which are examined in Part II of this dissertation.[602] But President M. Rajapaksa himself acknowledged the importance of subcontinental support, underlining that "we will never forget that in the defeat of the LTTE, India was a major factor."[603]

---

[598] After 2004, such military assistance included: a) Sale, lease and renovation of Off-Shore Patrol Vessels to the Sri Lankan Navy; b) Renovation of the Palaly base for the Sri Lankan Air Force; c) Indra 2 and other aerial radar systems; d) Anti-air artillery; e) Mi-17 transport helicopters. For details see Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1463-3; Nitin A. Gokhale, *Sri Lanka, from war to peace* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2009); Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 897; Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 1462. On the Indian naval assets as a "major deterrent" against the Sea Tigers, see C. A. Chandraprema, *Gota's war: the crushing of Tamil Tiger Terrorism in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: n/a, 2012), 295-6, 380-81.

[599] The first SLINEX joint exercise was held in Dec. 2005, after which Sri Lanka also began participating in India's multilateral MILAN naval exercises. India's Navy Chief at the time, Adm. A. Prakash, recalls: "We gave them a sympathetic shoulder … Given political constraints, we did everything we could to help them in terms of assistance, intelligence, maritime reconnaissance missions, cordons to impede LTTE resupply routes" (Interview 016). On rise in coordinated naval patrols after 2006: Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 888. On India's specific role in destroying the LTTE's floating warehouses, see Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 367-73.

[600] 2006-2009: India the second-largest arms supplier to Sri Lanka ($US41 million, 16% of total): http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/background. 2005-06: Training for 310 Sri Lankan naval officers and sailors, more than 75% of total foreign personnel trained: Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2005-06," (New Delhi2006), 51. By 2011-12, a total of 820 Sri Lankan military officers had been trained in India: http://nitinagokhale.blogspot.com/2012/12/india-sri-lanka-defence-ties-appraisal.html.

[601] On Western pressures at the UN, a senior Sri Lankan diplomat recalls India being cooperative with Colombo: "[India] did not actively support bringing [the] issue up at [the] UNSC and wanted the LTTE to go" (Interview 082). Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative at the UNHRC recalls "solid support" from India (Interview 037). On India's support as the USA delayed IMF loans, in early 2009: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09COLOMBO523_a.html, Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 464.

[602] An exception by EAM P. Mukherjee, on March 19, 2008 in parliament: "We would like to give you [Sri Lanka] all assistance which you require [to destroy the LTTE], which you want, and, actually, we are doing it," Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 111.

[603] In a 2014 interview to *The Hindu*: http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/we-will-not-allow-an-external-probe-says-sri-lankan-president-mahinda-rajapaksa/article6398175.ece.　　　　The　　　　semi-official

224

Why did New Delhi support the Sri Lankan Army offensive, despite internal and international pressure to coerce Colombo into suspending military operations or restart negotiations? One explanation is that India was merely reacting and adapting to changing circumstances, desperately cooperating to remain influential. [604] A closer examination, however, indicates that its support was more strategic, rooted in three evolving assessments about the conflict since the early 2000s.

Colombo calling: hawkish but cooperative

The most important factor driving India's supportive posture was based on a dual political assessment, after 2005: President Rajapaksa was preparing a military strategy that exposed the LTTE's operational weaknesses and tilted the war in Colombo's favor; but while pursuing this, he proactively cultivated a cooperative relationship with New Delhi, vowing to respect Indian security interests.

After being elected on a hardline and majoritarian Sinhala alliance, in November 2005, M. Rajapaksa immediately disowned the 2002 peace process under Norwegian mediation, and then gradually implemented an offensive strategy skillfully combining political, diplomatic and military means to split, isolate and weaken the LTTE. [605] Enjoying a parliamentary majority, he appointed a hardliner as his Prime Minister, two

---

biography of Defence Secretary G. Rajapaksa emphasizes that despite "tremendous pressure … [the] Government of India took the flak and shielded Sri Lanka." Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 476.

[604] E.g. Sandra Destradi, *Indian foreign and security policy in South Asia: regional power strategies* (New York: Routledge, 2012), Ch. 4.

[605] In early September, M. Rajapaksa announced his presidential coalition campaign with support of the extremist JVP, promising a complete renegotiation of the cease-fire agreement (CFA), a re-examination of the role of the Norwegian facilitators, opposition to any measure that could weaken the "unitary" state, and his opposition to the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS). This lead to a rift with the President C. B. Kumaratunga, from his own party: Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 260-77.

of his brothers as key advisors, and implemented an unprecedented military modernization program.[606] As the last round of peace talks failed, in October 2006, it thus became apparent in New Delhi that the conflict was escalating and that, under these new conditions, a full-blown war would favor Colombo.[607]

While in public India responded with its mantra about non-violence and the need for a "negotiated political settlement", it privately welcomed Rajapaksa's hardball approach as a way to pressure the LTTE to return to the negotiation table.[608] Eventually, as the Army kept striking victories that exposed the insurgents' weaknesses, a new best-case scenario started to emerge: a total defeat of the LTTE.[609] Depending on their respective access to ground intelligence and to Rajapaksa's decision-making circles, after 2007 Indian officials therefore slowly converged towards the recognition that the scenario of an LTTE elimination was not only increasingly likely, but also desirable.[610] Four factors contributed

---

[606] Between 2006 and 2009 the Sri Lankan Armed Forces' size increased by almost 80%, up to 300,000 men. On improvements in defence production and acquisition of equipment, inter-service coordination, strategic and operational reviews, reviving the Deep Penetration Units etc. see Ahmed Hashim, *When counterinsurgency wins: Sri Lanka's defeat of the Tamil Tigers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 46, 137, 63-5, 80-96.

[607] P. Heblikar, India's external intelligence agency (RAW) representative in Colombo (2002-06), recalls that by 2006 the military balance favored the government (Interview 047). N. Rao, Indian High Commissioner in Colombo at the time of the elections, recalls "it was clear [to New Delhi] that Rajapaksa was planning to change the terms of the war and develop a military strategy to defeat the LTTE" (Interview 023).

[608] EAM P. Mukherjee in parliament, Dec. 2006: MEA, "Annual Report 2005-06," (New Delhi 2006), 18. An official of the MEA working on Sri Lanka at the time recalls India's triple objectives as: a) Protect territorial unity and integrity of SL " at all cost;" b) Military solution not desirable because of potential human cost, so preference for a "peaceful dialogue;" and c) Implementation of constitutional amendment "13A" (Interview 020).

[609] S. Saran, who served as Foreign Secretary until late 2006, recalls: "it was immediately not apparent to us that the LTTE could be destroyed so quickly. [The] idea was that military pressure would force [the] LTTE to come back to table and accept some form of regional autonomy" (Interview 028). Several officials, including the Indian High Commissioner (A. Prasad) and a key Sri Lankan Army Commander (Maj. Gen. G. A. Chandrasiri), recognized that, at least until late 2007, even Colombo did not expect such a quick collapse of the LTTE and consequent victory (Interviews 006, 008, 047, 078).

[610] NSA M. K. Narayanan recalls: "[M. Rajapaksa] represented an aggressive line. … [but] we were actually quite happy that there was a hawk so he would deal with them [LTTE]" (Interview 077). Indian High Commissioner A. Prasad recalls the Army's successful Sampur offensive in Aug. 2006 as a "tipping point" (Interview 008). FS S. S. Menon notes that while it may not have always agreed on the methods, the

to this assessment, all of which reflecting New Delhi's satisfaction with Colombo's cooperative attitude.

First, President M. Rajakapsa informally adopted an "India first" policy on all security-related issues. His visit, and that of Defence Secretary G. Rajapaka (his brother) to New Delhi, in 2005 and 2006 respectively, served to request Indian support for Sri Lanka's military modernization plans.[611] While India only agreed to deliver a few of the items on their "shopping list", this worked as a confidence-building measure, signaling Colombo's intent not to cross any Indian red lines.[612] New Delhi thus reciprocated in a cooperative mode, for example by lifting the arms embargo and sharing crucial intelligence to undermine the LTTE.[613]

Second, as the military offensive accelerated in 2007, at Colombo's suggestion both governments established a high-level troika that facilitated bilateral coordination and insulated dialogue from domestic political pressures.[614] The special envoys met regularly from 2008 onwards, providing New Delhi with a direct channel to Colombo and an

Indian government after 2007 was "comfortable" with the increasing likelihood of an LTTE operational defeat (Interview 078). Despite being critical of the "manner" in which the Sri Lankan Army proceeded, minister P. Chidambaram recognizes that the LTTE's defeat was seen to be inevitable after 2007 (Interview 036).

[611] In 2006, G. Rajapaksa visits New Delhi to present a briefing to the Indian PM and NSA entitled "Military assistance required from the government of India". He was "squaring very frankly with the Indians and telling them that the LTTE was preparing for all out war and that [Sri Lanka] had to be prepared" so military assistance was "sough to meet such an eventuality": Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 295-6.

[612] FS S. S. Menon on meeting G. Rajapaksa and Sri Lanka's military "shopping list": "Very friendly consultations, we appreciated [that they] consulted India first, to avoid surprises" (Interview 078).

[613] In May 2007 G. Rajapaksa meets all service chiefs in India: "[The] Indian Navy chief assured Gota that Indian resources would continue to be diverted for surveillance duties as and when requested by the SLN" Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 428, see also 367-73. Sri Lankan Navy Chief at the time, V. Karannagoda, recalls 10 LTTE vessels were sunk in 2007, against only 4 in the preceding four year: https://lrrp2.wordpress.com/2012/09/07/war-on-terror-revisited-karannagoda-speaks-out/.

[614] On G. Rajapaksa's initiative to set up this *troika*: a "line of communication … a ground breaking arrangement" which "kept the Indian government informed [and] by 2007, the relationship was on a good footing" and "no major problems", see Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 427-8. The Indian side included NSA M. K. Narayanan, FS S. S. Menon, and Defence Secretary V. Singh..

informal setting to frankly exchange views on a variety of issues, from military operations to the diplomatic context.[615] Indian participants recall the troika's crucial role during the final months of the war, allowing both countries to communicate mutual concerns, coordinate action and overcome occasional disagreements.[616]

Third, even while pursuing its offensive, Colombo acknowledged India's advice that defeating the insurgency militarily was not tantamount to solving the ethnic conflict.[617] Sri Lankan officials signaled their understanding that India's support for a "military victory" against the LTTE was contingent on their capacity to implement a "political solution" after the war ended.[618]

Beyond just reassuring promises, Colombo was also acting on two fronts. On the one hand, after 2005, the government co-opted an LTTE splinter group into its coalition, which indicated that M. Rajapaksa was willing to accommodate Tamil leaders, even if

---

[615] M. K. Narayanan recalls that the *troika* was "very good; I used to have excellent conversations with Gota and Basil [Rajapaksa], sometimes they were tough, sometimes nice. … 2009 was probably the best year we had" (Interview 077). FS S. S. Menon says it served as a "very important, informal consultation channel," without note takers, minutes or agenda, thus allowing for a "frank exchange" of views (Interview 078).

[616] Indian priorities, in order of importance: a) no surprises, keep India in the loop on all operations; b) limit civilian casualties, avoid employment of heavy weaponry; c) pursue political solution and reforms as soon as possible to assuage Tamil minority and solve the ethnic conflict, preferably by implementing 13th amendment based on 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka agreement; d) consider timeline of Indian legislative elections (April-May 2009) and pressure of regional parties in Tamil Nadu on New Delhi. Conversely, some of the Sri Lankan priorities: a) avoid or limit cease-fire; b) no return to negotiations; c) no exile for LTTE leadership; (Interviews 008, 077, 078, and Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 476-82; Gokhale, *Sri Lanka*, XX-XX.)

[617] E.g. in response to NSA M. K. Narayanan's Aug. 2008 statement that "they [Sri Lankan government] haven't got the Tamil population on their side," the Sri Lankan Defence Secretary's emphasized: "nothing negative … He has only put in different words what our president has been saying, that we need to defeat terrorism but the [ethnic] problem needs to be resolved [politically]. …I understand him [Narayanan] very well," quoted in M. R. Narayan Swamy, *The Tiger Vanquished: LTTE's story* (New Delhi: Sage, 2010), 134-5.

[618] Jan. 2009 statement by the EAM: "military victories offer a political opportunity to restore life to normalcy in the Northern Province and throughout Sri Lanka," Bhasin, *IFR 2009*, 1514; see also MEA, "Annual Report 2008-09," (New Delhi 2009), 15. Sri Lankan diplomat D. Jayatilleka cogently defines the approach: "[when India opposed a] military solution … it did not mean that Sri Lanka should cease operations and talk to Prabhakaran. It meant that the political track should keep pace with the military track," Dayan Jayatilleka, *Long war, cold peace: Sri Lanka's north-south crisis* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2014), 334.

only to explore the insurgents' internal divisions.[619] On the other hand, in May 2008, the government held the first free elections in the Tamil-majority Eastern Province in more than two decades.[620] While skepticism remained, both developments seemingly reassured New Delhi sufficiently to adopt a wait and watch policy.

A final factor related to President Rajapaksa's policy of giving India exclusive access to provide humanitarian assistance in the "liberated" Northern war zones. After late 2008, Indian military teams operated on the ground to provide aid to internally displaced Tamils.[621] The Sri Lankan government also granted India a privileged role in post-war rehabilitation, reconstruction, and political reform plans.[622]

Together, these assessments about a cooperative Colombo determined India's supportive posture, reflected from early 2008 onwards in unprecedented statements supporting Sri Lanka's right to seek a "military victory" against the "terrorist" LTTE.[623]

---

[619] In 2004, the government induced the LTTE's Col. Karuna to defect and then cultivated him to join democratic politics: he formed a new party (TMVP), which won the Eastern Province's 2008 elections in alliance with the UPFA, and became a minister in 2009: Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 274, 358-60.

[620] G. Rajapaksa responding, in Feb. 2008, to Indian advice that the Tamils must be given "a fair deal": this "was exactly what they [government] were trying to show by the implementation of the provincial council system and the holding of elections in the eastern province." He also shared his strategy to "mainstream" former insurgents: Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 359-60, 429. A 2006 U.S. Embassy cable reports Indian officials saw "Karuna as an emerging political force to counter LTTE influence in the east … [and] as an evolving democratic politician," https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06COLOMBO721_a.html.

[621] After October 2008, including several field medical units, 62 people, including a dozen Army officers, which treated 50,000 IDs in India's largest humanitarian operation since the 2004 Tsunami: MEA, "Annual Report 2009-10," (New Delhi 2010), 17; Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 142-3.

[622]The total aid package amounted to over US$100 million (at 2009 rates). For project details, see http://www.cgijaffna.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/FINAL_DC_BROCHURE.pdf and MEA, "AR 09-10," 17. NSA M. K. Narayanan mentions this was expected as a reward, but not a key factor: "[Formally] we only had one demand: '13A+, please implement that'" (Interview 077).

[623] Jan. 13, 2008, in an interview, EAM P. Mukherjee: "India's position in respect of terrorism is 'zero tolerance'. Therefore, any country which takes action against the terrorists is free to do so within its legal system," Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 30. An Oct. 26 joint statement emphasizes that "both sides agreed that terrorism should be countered with resolve," http://www.mea.gov.lk/index.php/media/news-archive/1458-india-sri-lanka-joint-press-release.

<u>"Terrorist Tigers" as a rising domestic security threat</u>

> *"[The] decimation of the LTTE was something … good."[624]*
>
> PM M. Singh, 2011

In contrast with the positive assessment about a cooperative Colombo, New Delhi's supportive stance in 2009 was also based on a negative assessment about the LTTE's intransigent secessionism and its increasingly radical war fighting tactics, which threatened to prolong the conflict and spillover to affect India's domestic security.

India saw the LTTE with default hostility: after 1987 the Tigers had turned against India, first by inflicting thousands of casualties on its peacekeeping mission and then by assassinating former Prime Minister R. Gandhi while he campaigned for re-election.[625] But New Delhi could not ignore that the Tigers had, over the years, succeeded in establishing a parallel state on a third of the island.

However skeptical, in 2002 India was therefore willing to give the peace process a chance because its officials recognized that as long as the LTTE remained in control over the Tamil civilian population, it was indispensable to a political settlement and could possibly be "mainstreamed" by disarming and reforming into a democratic party.[626] As a senior

---

[624] June 29: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2011* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2012), 660.

[625] NSA M. K Narayanan therefore calls 1991 a "turning point," after which the LTTE was banned and declared an "enemy of the Indian state" (Interview 077). See also J. N. Dixit, ed. *External affairs: cross-border relations* (New Delhi: Lotus, 2003), 92-93.

[626] Explanations for India's support for the peace process were two-fold: a) the LTTE "needed to be securely tied to a peace process in order to de-fang it," and b) even if it failed, it should expose the widening gap between the LTTE's military strategy and the merits of the legitimate Tamil cause. While it had no direct links with the LTTE, India signaled its involvement via Norwegian mediators: Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, xxix. On the 2002 cease-fire agreement's objectives of "de-escalation", "socialization" and "politicking" of the LTTE towards "competitive politics" (esp. articles 1.11 and 1.12, possibly with Indian influence), see Austin Fernando, *My belly is white* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2008), 294-332, 59-416.

official in charge of Sri Lanka at the time, R. Abhyankar defined the Indian approach cogently: "to let Norway take the lead [but] preserve its options on a final settlement."[627]

Over the following years, however, three factors confirmed India's negative assessment about the LTTE as an insurmountable obstacle to conflict resolution and as an increasing threat to Indian domestic security.[628] First, the LTTE's lack of commitment to the peace process after 2002 soon vindicated Indian latent suspicions about its duplicitous nature.[629] The Tigers were not only using negotiations tactically to build up their military capabilities, but also repeatedly violated the cease-fire and continued their targeted assassinations.[630]

According to Indian officials following the peace process, New Delhi was further put off by the LTTE's a) persistent unwillingness to disarm;[631] b) resolute adherence to secessionism as the only acceptable solution;[632] c) claim to be the exclusive representative

---

[627] in Srikanth Paranjape and Rajendra M. Abhyankar, eds., *India and Sri Lanka: future imperfect* (New Delhi: G B Books, 2014), 25.

[628] N. Deo, the Joint Secretary for Sri Lanka at the time, recalls that by 2005 India saw the "LTTE as the problem, not the solution." In the same vein, former Foreign Secretary N. Rao notes that in 2009 "not too many tears shed in GOI after their [LTTE] defeat" (Interviews 061 and 023).

[629] An Indian diplomat working on Sri Lanka at the MEA recalls: "we used to tell Solheim 'do not underestimate LTTE, look at our experience.' … [but] they felt [confident] because they saw themselves, unlike India, to be strictly neutral and unbiased" (Interview 020). As early as Sept. 2003, the Indian High Commissioner N. Sen confides to his American counterpart: "The LTTE needs to see only sticks, not carrots" https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03COLOMBO1546_a.html

[630] The RAW chief in Colombo, P. Heblikar (2002-06), recalls: India was "supportive, but reticent … [because] negotiations soon reflected [the] LTTE's radicalization, convincing us that it was not a trustworthy interlocutor to solve the conflict at its root" (Interview 047). Senior editor N. Ram summarizes the Indian thinking at the time: "major obstacle was that the LTTE was never serious about substantive talks, only involved in talks about talks or as strategy to play tricks" (Interview 044). N. Rao, former High Commissioner to Colombo, emphasizes the LTTE's assassination of Foreign Minister L. Kadirgamar, in 2005, as a "major blow-back" to residual Indian hopes about the LTTE reforming (Interview 023).

[631] See e.g. Indian High Commissioner N. Sen's 2003 assessment, as reported by a U.S. Embassy cable: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03COLOMBO189_a.html

[632] New Delhi was vexed by T. V. Prabhakaran's negative reaction to the Oslo Communiqué of Dec. 5, 2002, in which his strategist A. Balasingham had indicated LTTE's willingness to consider a solution within a federal Sri Lanka. In his Nov. 27, 2006 speech he committed to fight for "an independent state": http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/29nov2006.htm.

of the "Tamil cause;"[633] d) continued anti-India stance and rhetoric;[634] e) tactical move to

support M. Rajapaksa's election in 2005;[635] and f) lacking involvement by T. V.

Prabhakaran in the peace process.[636] T. V. Prabhakaran was therefore seen as boxing

himself into a corner, failing to explore the peace process as a last window of opportunity

to reassure India, reform his organization, and negotiate a settlement within a united Sri

Lanka.[637]

Second, on top of the death of two of his more moderate advisers, Prabhakaran's all-or-

nothing strategy was also weakening and dividing the organization.[638] This led to a

devastating split ending the LTTE's control over the East, in 2004, when a key Tiger

commander defected to work with the Sri Lankan government.[639] India saw this as the

---

[633] See e.g. May, 2005 U.S. Ambassador's report noting the Indian DCM's concerns about the post-tsunami aid distribution mechanism (PTOMS): "allocating the only slots reserved for Tamils at the national and regional level to the LTTE reinforces the Tigers' claim to be the sole representative of the Tamil people". https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05COLOMBO888_a.html

[634] In a 2006 interview, A. Balasingham made an unprecedented apologetic reference to the LTTE's assassination of former Indian PM R. Gandhi, in 1991, as "a monumental historical tragedy for which we deeply regret," and appealing India to be "magnanimous and put the past behind." Within days, however, he was overruled by T. V. Prabhakaran, who refused to express any responsibility or regret: http://tamilnation.co/intframe/india/060627anton.htm.

[635] It is widely believed that the ban enforced by the LTTE in its areas of control during the 2005 Presidential elections contributed decisively to the victory (by just two percentage points) of the "hawkish" M. Rajapaksa over the R. Wickremesinghe, who seemed committed to continue the peace process. Some Indians interpreted this as LTTE's preference for a military escalation.

[636] A. Balasingham represented the LTTE in all but one of the peace process rounds, from 2002 to 2006. NSA M. K. Narayanan recalls this was problematic: "You had to contact with Prabhakaran [directly], no interlocutor possible. … He doesn't believe in anyone else [so Norwegian attempt to engage him via representatives was a "shot in the dark"]" (Interview 077).

[637] NSA M. K. Narayanan recalls that, by 2006, "there was no point [anymore] you could reason with him. [At the same time] No way that you could talk to any of the moderate Tamils, who we would have put in peril. So we were in a stalemate" (Interview 077). Thereafter, there are indications that Prabhakaran may have attempted some belated outreach efforts to India, up to 2008, for example via B. Nadesan, but New Delhi "remained unmoved": Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, lii-liii.

[638] S. Pathmanathan left the organization in 2003; Anton Balasingham died in Dec. 2006; and his successor S. P. Thamilselvan died in a SLAF strike in Nov. 2007. On these splits, particularly apparent after 2003-2003, see Fernando, *My belly*, 525-47.

[639] Discussed in detail in the previous section. Col. Karuna defected from the LTTE, together with almost 1,000 insurgents, in March 2004, and then settled in India, indicating a possible Indian role. See Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 274, 358-60; Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 15.

most positive, even if unintended effect of the peace process: while persisting in his radical quest for sovereignty through force, the leader faced the rising dissent of younger insurgents who were willing to lay down arms in exchange for political assurances.[640]

Finally, New Delhi was also concerned about the impact of the LTTE's strategy to expand both its operations on Indian domestic security. First, the insurgents increased their conventional naval and aerial operations in and around Sri Lanka, threatening Indian fishermen, shipping lanes and air space.[641] Second, they persisted in their non-traditional capabilities, including suicide and cyber attacks. [642] Third, they relied increasingly on support from India's border region, in Tamil Nadu, after their international support network began suffering from tighter counter-terrorist cooperation.[643] In its weakness, the LTTE was growing increasingly desperate, setting off an alarm bell in New Delhi: it was now of paramount importance to terminate the Tigers as "quick and cleanly" as possible, denying them the option to fall back − and affect the order and security − on Indian soil.[644]

---

[640] The RAW official in Colombo at the time, P. Heblikar, recalls that as an Easterner, Karuna had been deprived of the LTTE's leadership roles concentrated among Northerners, and also represented a new generation that was fatigued by two decades of war and thus responsive to "inducements" (Interview 047).

[641] In 2003-04 the Air Tigers built a new runway in the Vanni jungle and weaponized small civilian aircrafts that launched bomb attacks on Colombo after 2007. The Sea Tigers destroyed Sri Lankan Navy vessels, hijacked merchant ships in international waters, and also attacked Indian fishermen in the Palk Straits. Indian Navy Chief A. Prakash (2004-06) recalls Indian concerns that the Sea Tigers were becoming a "non-state, terrorist naval threat" and specific attempts to train its personnel against them (Interview 016).

[642] In 1997, the Internet Black Tigers launched their first cyber-attack on Sri Lankan embassies abroad: http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main41.asp?filename=Ne230509coverstory.asp. P. Heblikar recalls that India's rising concern at the LTTE's suicide squads, aerial and naval operations reflecting "growing desperation" and possible transformation into a non-conventional force (Interview 047).

[643] By 1997 the LTTE had offices or cells in 42 states, and despite post 9/11 controls, its international organizational network continued to grow, including in India's border state of Tamil Nadu: Rohan Gunaratna, "Impact of the mobilized Tamil diaspora on the protracted conflict in Sri Lanka," in *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons* ed. Rupesinghe Kumar (Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006); Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 81-7, 119-20.

[644] NSA M. K. Narayanan describes such scenarios: "There were reports about LTTE setting up bases in Tamil Nadu … you were now worried this would become the staging ground for militancy on our soil. …

A fine balance, between Chinese weapons and Western morality

The third factor driving India's supportive posture towards Colombo related to its objective to preserve geopolitical predominance in Sri Lanka by insulating the island from extra-regional influence, especially from China and the West. This required a fine balance between two contrasting assessments.

In the first assessment, India had to counterbalance China's inroads into Sri Lanka but any attempt to deny Colombo's new reliance on Beijing would be either fruitless or counterproductive: engagement was thus paramount.[645] After 2006, M. Rajapaksa's strategy for a military modernization and offensive required a massive supply of weapons, leading the government to increase its share in defense expenditure by 50%.[646]

While New Delhi privately agreed with his plans, India's military and intelligence assistance – however crucial to the outcome of the war – remained limited, because it was either unwilling or unable to deliver more.[647] Colombo thus looked for an alternative in Beijing, which provided most of the required weapons until the end of the war.[648]

The concern [about] radicalization of sections of Tamil masses, more atrocities, more people getting killed, people coming here" (Interview 077).

[645] Sri Lankan ambassador N. Rodrigo: "an abiding feature of every [Sri Lankan] government, whatever its political leanings, is that consistently sound bilateral relations have been maintained with China" Nihal Rodrigo, "Perspectives from Sri Lanka," in *Emerging China: Prospects of Partnership in Asia*, ed. Sudhir T. Devare, Swaran Singh, and Reena Marwah (London: Routledge, 2014), 246. On the China tilt before 2005, to balance India and the West, see http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=127007

[646] S. Selvanathan and E. Selvanathan, "Defence expenditure and economic growth: A case study of Sri Lanka using causality analysis," *International Journal of Development and Conflict* 4, no. 2 (2014): 71.

[647] Unwilling because of domestic pressures (analyzed in Part II), and incapable because of deficiencies in the defence-export industry. To the Indian Navy's chagrin, this delays the transfer of two OPVs to SLN in 2006, according to the its Chief at the time, Adm. S. Mehta (Interview 079).

[648] China delivered 60% of Sri Lankan arms imports between 2006-2009: http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/background. On relations with Beijing and NORINCO to

In order to assuage political opposition at home, Indian officials made occasional statements in public to express their discontent at such Chinese supplies.[649] In private, however, New Delhi had, from 2006 onwards, cleared Sri Lanka's requests to procure military assistance from China and elsewhere.[650]

While it would ideally have preferred a different supplier, New Delhi was reassured by Colombo's cooperative "India first" approach – giving it first right of refusal – and the capacity to monitor and minimize the strategic implications of Chinese assistance.[651] Paradoxically, in order to preserve its geopolitical influence and avoid pushing Sri Lanka further into China's strategic orbit, New Delhi thus ended up outsourcing to Beijing the "dirty job" of assisting the Sri Lankan Army to eliminate the LTTE.

In India's second assessment, the escalating conflict was an open invitation to internationalization, especially as the post-9/11 United States had accelerated its "democracy promotion" spree by toppling regimes and as liberal principles of humanitarian interventionism gained ground at the United Nations and across the West:

---

supply artillery-locating radars, Chengdu F-7G interceptors etc., see Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 318-19, 88-94, 422; N. Manoharan, "Enter the Dragon: China Factor in India-Sri Lanka relations," in *India and Sri Lanka: Future Imperfect*, ed. S. Paranjape and R. Abhyankar (New Delhi: G B Books, 2014), 103-13. The Sri Lankan ambassador in Beijing at the time, N. Rodrigo, recalls that China often delivered crucial short shelf-life ammunition in less than ten days (Interview 063).

[649] M. K. Narayanan on June 1, 2007, after meeting Chief-Minister M. Karunanidhi in Chennai: "We strongly believe that whatever requirements the Sri Lankan government has, they should come to us. ... We do not favour their going to China or Pakistan or any other country." http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/centre-considering-unified-command-for-armed-forces/article1850313.ece

[650] When first approached by Sri Lanka with its "shopping list" in 2006, India expressed its inability to deliver most items, and suggested Colombo procure them elsewhere. E.g in 2008, G. Rajapaksa attempted to import ammunition from India, but the "supremely pragmatic" Indian Defence Secretary V. Singh responds: "such equipment should be purchased from whoever is able to supply [them]" Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 295-6, 428-30. FS S. S. Menon recalls: "We preferred Chinese weapons in Sri Lankan hands rather than in Chinese hands. We assisted Sri Lanka in [alternative] procurement." (Interview 078).

[651] In the Sri Lankan Defence Secretary's semi-official biography: "[Sri Lanka] turned to other countries [for weapons] only when India was unable to supply" and, in 2007, it had to assure New Delhi that it was paying for Chinese supplies: Chandraprema, *Gota's war*, 428-30.

India's continued regional security predominance thus required insulating the island from such risks of interference.

These concerns were first apparent in 2001, when New Delhi played a background role in setting up the peace process and chose Norway as the mediator.[652] After the cease-fire agreement was signed, in February 2002, the mediators did attempt to respect India's "special" security interests by keeping New Delhi in the loop.[653] Despite this, after 2003, Indian officials started to reproach Western mediators for favoring the LTTE and for not heeding their advice on the insurgents' devious tactics.[654] Having opened the door to Scandinavian interlocutors and a military monitoring mission, Indian officials were particularly anxious that a spiraling extra-regional involvement, referred to internally as "mission creep," could erode its security prerogatives and interests.[655]

Such concerns intensified after the peace process faltered in 2006 and Western governments became increasingly hostile against Colombo's military offensive. While

---

[652] Norway's deputy FM V. Helgesen recalled that "we could not have achieved any [CFA] success without the active role played by India at every step of the negotiation." On Indian involvement in drafting the cease-fire agreement (CFA), via its NSA B. Mishra and RAW, see Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, xxviii. On the criteria behind the choice of Norway, and Indian vetoes of France and the United Kingdom under EAM J. Singh, see Paranjape and Abhyankar, *Future imperfect*, 22.

[653] While not formally involved, India assumed, in practice, the external role of a veto-holding interested part. NSA J. N. Dixit recalls that the Norwegians were expected to keep India "fully informed," Dixit, *External Affairs*, 89. Both the Norwegian mediators and Sri Lankan ministers thus made regular stopovers in New Delhi for "special briefs" to the PM, NSA, FS, or EAM. For 2006, see e.g. Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 884, 90.

[654] Indian officials at the time on such concerns: 1) Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, N. Rao, recalls that the Norwegians had an implicit "empathy for Tamil cause as represented by the LTTE as freedom fighters;" the Joint Secretary in charge of Sri Lanka at the MEA, N. Deo, recalls that Norway was "seen as representing only Western interests, with an excessive focus on human rights;" and an Indian official dealing with the UNHRC, at the time, notes that the Norwegians shared "American missionary zeal" and had a "positive bias towards the LTTE" (Interviews 023, 061, 076).

[655] India stressed that the CFA Monitoring Mission should be composed exclusively of Nordic countries, opposed a stronger UN presence, and refused to join the Tokyo Donors Conference and the U.S./E.U.-led International Contact Group on Sri Lanka; an approach R. Abhyankar describes as "a classic case of preserving its options or 'masterly inactivity'": Paranjape and Abhyankar, *Future imperfect*, 23-4. When, in 2002, Japan attempted to play a more active role in the peace process, according to Sri Lankan FM M. Moragoda, India's NSA "[Brajesh] Mishra called the Japanese 'artless' and alleged that [Japan] was 'heedless' of vital Indian security interests," while EAM Y. Sinha asked "who is Japan to get involved in our region?" quoted in https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/02COLOMBO2312_a.html.

New Delhi shared many of their liberal concerns about the need for a political settlement, it disagreed on the effectiveness of coercion.

New Delhi feared that further external pressure on Colombo – through condemnatory resolutions, human rights inquiries, or economic and military sanctions – would have a triple negative effect on its security interests in Sri Lanka: 1) domestically, it would strengthen M. Rajapaksa's conservative support base among the Sinhala majority and decrease his incentives to implement a political settlement, thus perpetuating the conflict; 2) it would further increase Sri Lanka's incentives to rope in China to counterbalance the West, thus augmenting Beijing's strategic foothold in the region; and 3) it would turn Sri Lanka into an international pariah, subject to interventionist regime-change policies which risked plunging another Indian neighbor into chronic instability.[656]

This assessment is reflected in India's dialogue with the United States on Sri Lanka, which despite such concerns and disagreements reflected an extraordinary alignment of views and even occasional coordination until 2008.[657] But in early 2009, under President B. Obama, Washington tilted towards the liberal-internationalist agenda, pressuring Colombo into halting its military offensive, return to the negotiation table, or respond to alleged human rights violations.[658] The Indo-American separation thus took symbolical

---

[656] Interviews with various Indian officials who dealt with Sri Lanka after 2006, including NSA M. K. Narayanan (077), FS S. S. Menon (078), and Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, A. Prasad (008).

[657] Ambassador J. Lunstead (2003-06) recalls U.S.-India dialogue on Sri Lanka being marked by "openness, transparency, and a lack of suspicion. … This new atmosphere was bolstered by actions by both sides to share information and, to a lesser extent, to coordinate their policies," Jeffrey J. Lunstead, *The United States' Role in Sri Lanka's Peace Process, 2002-2006* (Colombo: The Asia Foundation, 2007), 25. His predecessor A. Wills (2000-2003) on a meeting in Feb. 2003 with his Indian counterpart N. Sen: "We were so much in accord that it was a little surreal." https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03COLOMBO189_a.html. For this close dialogue and coordination, especially on delivering military assistance under Amb. R. Blake (2006-09), see e.g. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06COLOMBO2123_a.html.

[658] After 2006, the E.U. took a series of decisions and resolutions at the UN to denounce human rights abuses, to expand the UN presence in Sri Lanka, to impose fact-finding missions etc. which were opposed by Sri Lanka. The U.S.A. had supported these moves but adopted a leading role in early 2009, culminating

effect precisely on May 20th 2009: just as India's two special envoys arrived in Colombo to congratulate and cooperate with President Rajapaksa, the local U.S. Ambassador, R. O. Blake Jr. – who had largely supported India's policy and the military offensive – ended his posting and departed Sri Lanka, marking Washington's leap onto the European bandwagon to condemn and coerce the Sri Lankan government.

*

The Sri Lankan government could not have won the war, in 2009, without India's supportive posture, which oscillated between passive permissiveness and active assistance. Far from being reactionary, New Delhi's cooperation was based on a triple strategic assessment that evolved since the early 2000s and accelerated after President M. Rajapaksa's military offensive, launched in 2006: 1) The Sri Lankan government was firmly in power and kept all channels of communication open and adopted a cooperative "India first" posture on both security and political affairs; 2) India's hostility to the LTTE was reinforced as the insurgents remained intransigent about a separate Tamil state and used the peace process to expand their military capabilities, which threatened India's domestic order and stability in the bordering state of Tamil Nadu; and 3) any type of Indian coercion was expected to reduce its geopolitical predominance on the island: it would accelerate the Sri Lankan outreach to China and subject the Rajapaksa regime to increasing Western regime-change pressures.

---

in pressures to include Sri Lanka in the formal agenda of the UNSC and also in a UNHRC special session, on May 26. Indian and Sri Lankan officials recall the hostile tone of such initiatives. For 2007, see http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/SpecialSessions/Session11/Pages/11thSpecialSession.aspx; also https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09COLOMBO322_a.html, Jayatilleka, *Long War*, 284-313.

3. Myanmar 2007

In September of 2007, the streets of Yangon were once again covered in the blood of pro-democracy protesters, as the military regime refused to back down. However, despite extraordinary domestic and international pressure, the Indian government stood firm in its resolve to continue engaging Myanmar's generals. This cooperative posture, contrasting with its pro-democracy coercive stance in 1988, was rooted in three assessments: 1) the regime was firmly in power and gave India unprecedented access to Myanmar, with a revolutionary improvement in bilateral relations ongoing since 2000; 2) by largely succeeding in its own counter-insurgency strategy, as well as coordinating and cooperating with the Indian Army against cross-border security threats, Myanmar's Army played an indispensable role in stabilizing India's border states in the Northeast; and 3) the generals' attempt to rope in India to decrease their reliance on China and avoid Western pressures offered New Delhi a geostrategic window of opportunity to expand its regional security umbrella and link up with Southeast Asia.

*

"Deora, don't go for gas, go for democracy!" Despite such banners in New Delhi, on September 23rd 2007, India's Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, M. Deora departed to Myanmar in pursuit of its precious hydrocarbons.[659] The timing could not have been more symbolic of India's policy of engagement towards its Eastern neighbor, as the military junta there – formally the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) – faced the largest pro-democracy protests in twenty years, also known as the "Saffron Revolution" in reference to the mass participation of Buddhist monks. So just as the

---

[659] "Explaining India's silence over Burma," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7013975.stm

Indian minister signed an energy agreement to explore deep-water oil and gas blocks, Myanmar's ruling generals were preparing to crack down on almost 100,000 protesters gathering in the streets and pagodas across the country.[660]

As demonstrations escalated over the next days, with dozens killed and thousands detained, the Indian government came under increasing domestic and international pressure to denounce the military's atrocities and reconsider its "business as usual" approach.[661] The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other officials thus reacted swiftly to "express concern" and urged the SPDC to accelerate its "broad-based" political reforms with the participation of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.[662]

Such appeals were not just an expression of cynic diplomacy to placate pressure: for several years, both in public and in private, India had repeatedly beckoned the generals to liberalize their regime in order to avoid popular unrest and political instability.[663] In 2004, for example, the PM Singh had assured his parliamentarians that "we conveyed that while India did not wish to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs, we would

---

[660] *Report of the U. N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro: http://burmalibrary.org/docs4/HRC2007-12--SRM-A-HRC-6-14-en.pdf. For details on the energy cooperation agreement: http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=31405

[661] Assessment by the U.S. mission: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07RANGOON974_a.html. The U.N. Secretary-General's representative for Myanmar, I. Gambari, visited India several times in 2007 to persuade New Delhi to take on a more vocal posture. On domestic pressure, see e.g. 1) Editorial of India's largest English-language daily, *The Times of India*: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/edit-page/Raise-the-Pitch/articleshow/2426699.cms; 2) Statement by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which supported the governing coalition: http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/cpim-concerned-at-myanmar-incidents/article1920156.ece; 3) Protest rally attended by opposition leaders and former Prime Ministers: http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/peace-rally-for-democracy-in-myanmar/article1921909.ece.

[662] EAM P. Mukherjee, on Sept. 26: "Myanmar's process of national reconciliation initiated by the authorities should be expedited," Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1665, 300. Hosting Myanmar's FM U Nyan Win, in Jan. 2008, the Indian PM "stressed the need for greater urgency in bringing about political reforms and national reconciliation in Myanmar." MEA, "Annual Report 2007-08," (New Delhi 2008), 12.

[663] See e.g. Oct. 29, 2004, joint statement after the visit of SPDC Chairman T. Shwe to New Delhi: "[The] Indian side … expressed support for national reconciliation and early transition to democracy in Myanmar." Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 955.

welcome early realization of the goal of multi-party democracy based on national reconciliation and an inclusive approach."[664]

In practice, however, beyond such public statements and friendly advice, New Delhi's decision-makers persisted with their engagement policy and refused to join Western efforts to pressure Myanmar, including through what it defined as "counter-productive," "intrusive," "country-specific" and "condemnatory" UN resolutions. [665] Alluding to India's geographic proximity, Foreign Secretary S. S. Menon also rejected economic pressures, noting that "the desire for sanctions" was "directly proportional to the distance from Myanmar of the country demanding it."[666] Over the following months, India-Myanmar relations therefore not only survived, but also thrived with a series of high-level visits further expanding political, economic and military links.[667]

What led the world's largest democracy to adopt this cooperative posture in 2007 towards authoritarian Myanmar? Why did the Indian government brush off pressures attempting to shame it into curtailing ties with an isolated and repressive military regime? Three strategic assessments drove New Delhi to privilege engagement.

---

[664] Dec. 21: Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 414. For a similar statement, see Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 785-6.

[665] Sept. 14, 2007, EAM P. Mukherjee: "It is for the people of the country to decide what form of arrangement they want (…) we have lived with military regimes in our neighborhood for quite some time." http://www.livemint.com/Politics/eoiAQL1wvBc0z7mmEXxAdP/India-set-to-engage-Myanmar-to-try-and-snag-more-gas-supply.html. Response to UNHRC resolution 5-S1, adopted in early Oct.: India "regrets … unhelpful tone" and calls for a resolution that is "forward looking, non-condemnatory and seeks to engage the authorities in Myanmar in a constructive manner" Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1667-8. See also Indian explanation of vote against UNGA Third Committee's resolution A/C.3/62/L.41, Nov. 20: https://www.pminewyork.org/adminpart/uploadpdf/66252ind1397.pdf

[666] Feb. 11 2008: Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 1646.

[667] Myanmar visits to India for wide-ranging consultations: Foreign Minister (Dec. 31 to Jan. 4), deputy FM (Dec. 11-14 and Jan. 23-26), and the SPDC Vice-Chairman M. Aye (Apr. 2008). In Feb. 2008, FS S. S. Menon visited Myanmar, opposed sanctions, welcomed the SPDC's intent to hold a referendum, implement a new constitution, and organize parliamentary elections by 2010: Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 1646.

<u>Unprecedented access to a robust regime</u>

> *We cannot make our relationship with Myanmar conditional upon [its] internal questions.*[668]
>
> K. Sibal, Indian Foreign Secretary, 2003

India's supportive stance in 2007 was primarily based on a dual and positive assessment about the regime's robustness and cooperative nature. Lacking leverage to influence the domestic balance of forces in Myanmar, New Delhi decided to preserve its unprecedented access to the generals.

First, despite mass pro-democracy protests, the military regime was assessed to be firmly entrenched, unlikely to collapse or accept any imposed change. The leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi, remained under house arrest, while the SPDC had consolidated its pervasive control, running an economy that grew above 10% for over a decade. In India's view, the "Saffron Revolution" could therefore, at best, serve as a timely alarm to remind the generals about the need to liberalize their regime, but in itself it would not pose a challenge to what New Delhi saw as the existing "power centers."[669]

Having ruled the country for more than half a century, the *Tatmadaw* remained an indispensable actor to initiate regime change, and until it did so voluntarily, New Delhi would have to cooperate with it.[670] Any Indian or external pressure would at best be

---

[668] Oct 21, 2003: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 575.

[669] According to interviews with FS S. S. Menon (078) and NSA M. K. Narayanan (077). For a summary of these reasons, see Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," 308-10.

[670] In 2006 e.g. the U.S. mission chief quotes the Indian Ambassador B. K. Mitra as saying that "[change] can happen in ten years or tomorrow" and expressing New Delhi's preference for a gradual transition: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06RANGOON612_a.html.

ineffectual, and at worst be counterproductive by affecting India's interests and even further entrenching the regime.

Second, and most importantly, after 2000 India's relations with Myanmar had expanded and reached unprecedented strength, superior even to the Indo-Burmese extraordinary engagement of the 1950s, under Nehru and U Nu. The SPDC was proving to be all-out cooperative, taking the initiative to reach out and engage India across different sectors, from economic to military cooperation. New Delhi saw this a window of opportunity, especially given the difficult past: after India supported pro-democracy forces in 1988, the generals had placed New Delhi in the "enemy camp" and rebuffed its normalization attempts throughout the 1990s.[671] The relationship had thus remained conflicted, with ups and downs, progressing via "fits and starts" for almost a decade.[672]

However, in January 2000, Yangon finally responded positively to an Indian outreach initiative led by its Army Chief, Gen. V. P. Malik – a rare and successful example of Indian defense diplomacy. The discrete meetings in each country were held outside capital cities, insulating bilateral talks from political pressures, and paved the way for normalization at the highest level.[673] While Yangon saw this as a confidence-building

---

[671] Interview with S. Saran (028), former ambassador to Myanmar (1997-2000). He recalls that, upon his arrival in Yangon, relations were marked by "frigidity": http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/edit-page/The-Virtue-Of-Pragmatism/articleshow/6266602.cms. His predecessor, L. T. Pudaite (1995-97), recalls various bilateral projects delayed because "the Myanmar authorities were at times frustratingly cautious and slow to respond" Lal T. Pudaite, *Mizoram and look east policy* (New Delhi: Akansha, 2010), 47. Similar view by Amb. G. Parthasarathy (1992-95), who recalls a "strained relationship" (Inteview 080).

[672] R. Bhatia, Joint Secretary in charge of Myanmar in the early 1990s (Interview 004). U Wynn Lwin, Myanmar's ambassador in India (1992-1999), recalls warning Indian officials: "you can have either democracy or security in Myanmar, not both" (Interview 060). The domestic pressures and liberal factors that hindered this normalization are respectively analyzed in chapters 5 and 6.

[673] Gen. Maung Aye, SPDC Vice-Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's Army, visited India on Jan. 7-8, 2000, invited by Indian Army Chief, Gen. V. P. Malik, who had been to Myanmar in the preceding days. The Indian delegation included two ministers (commerce and power). India's Ambassador in Yangon at the time, S. Saran, recalls the pivotal importance of these talks, their discrete location in Shillong (Meghalaya) allowing for an "ice-breaker" effect which paved the way for the first high-level

measure signaling India's intent to engage without any ideological strings attached, New Delhi was reassured that, in exchange, the generals were willing to deliver on India's economic and security interests.[674]

Yangon thereafter kept the initiative, pushing for a greater Indian presence in Myanmar and granting it extraordinary access.[675] Indian officials welcomed this, and were often surprised at the sudden transformation of the relationship, which was moving "from strength to strength."[676] Even External Affairs Minister K. N. Singh, who had been skeptical about engagement, recalls that the SPDC regime was "much more forthcoming and friendly than in the past" when he first visited Myanmar, in March 2005.[677]

A series of key bilateral visits cemented this engagement, including Myanmar's first head of state visit to India in 25 years (2004), and the first-ever visit of an Indian President to Myanmar (2006).[678] This revolutionary change gave India an unprecedentedly large

---

bilateral visit since 1987: in November, Maung Aye was received in New Delhi with full honors (Interview 028). See also Ved P. Malik, "Reflections on Indo-Myanmar Relations," *Scholar Warrior* Fall(2012): 4-7.

[674] N. Deo, in charge of Myanmar at the time at the MEA, recalls: "[despite] recognition that Myanmar's Army was not a model army, there was an overall wish to have a 'working relation'" (Interview 061). The Director-General in Myanmar's Foreign Ministry at the time, N. M. Shein, recalls that it "ushered in a new chapter": Nyunt Maung Shein, "India-Myanmar Relations after 2010 Elections," (Hong Kong 2012), 5.

[675] Myanmar's ambassador to India, Brig.-Gen. U Kyi Thein (2003-07), recalls his two main missions: a) to convince India to invest in Myanmar; and b) to explain his country's complex domestic political situation and plans for liberalization. He recalls that the "normalization period" was only possible because India engaged, e.g. by hosting Than Shwe in Nov. 2004, which he describes as "a very important confidence-building measure," and because of Amb. S. Saran's role as a "pioneer" (Interview 030).

[676] Interview (004) with R. Bhatia, Indian ambassador in Yangon 2002-05. NSA M. K. Narayanan recalls: in the early 2000s, "we developed a much better equation with Myanmar" (Interview 077).

[677] Interview 075.

[678] Gen. Than Shwe's visit to India, in Nov. 2004, was the first bilateral interaction at the level of head of state/government in 17 years. His delegation included three other SPDC Generals and eight cabinet ministers. Myanmar's FM visited India thrice in 2004-05. In the opposite direction, India's President visited Myanmar in March 2006, following on India's Vice-President visit in 2003, the first high-level visit to Myanmar since 1987. India's EAM visited in 2002, 2005 and 2007.

footprint in Myanmar: within just a few years, its loans and aid duplicated, the number of new agreements signed increased three-fold, and bilateral trade rose five-fold.[679]

Booming military relations played a vital role in normalization. Complaining in 1999 about political obstacles, an Indian general in charge of the country's Eastern Command had suggested that "India should leave its Burma policy to the Army."[680] Indeed, after its successful experiment in defense diplomacy in 2000, New Delhi's bureaucrats recognized the benefits of deputing India's top brass to Yangon, which facilitated engagement, opened new channels of communication and increased mutual trust.[681] By 2007, Myanmar was sending dozens of *Tatmadaw* officials for training in India and, for the first time in more than half a century, accepting military assistance from New Delhi.[682]

Just a few days into his new appointment as Indian Army Chief, in early October 2007, Gen. D. Kapoor, thus naturally brushed off the crisis in Myanmar as an "internal

---

[679] Agreements from 11 (1993-2000) to 32 (2001-2008), with a peak of eight in 2004 alone: Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 231-5. Bilateral trade increased from US$206 million (1999-2000) to US$995 million (2007-08): Khriezo Yhome, "India-Myanmar relations (1998-2008): A decade of redefining bilateral ties," in *Occasional Paper 10* (New Delhi: ORF, 2009), 6. Loans and aid volume duplicated between 2001-04 and 2004-07, peaking in 2006-07 at 3% of India's total: http://www.iilj.org/newsandevents/documents/mullen.pdf, Yhome, "India-Myanmar," 11.

[680] Lt.-Gen. H. R. S. Kalkat, in charge of Indian Army's Eastern Command, in an Oct. 1999 talk: "We are soldiers, they [Myanmar's SPDC] are soldiers and our blood is thicker than the blood of bureaucrats," quoted in Subir Bhaumik, "Guns, drugs and rebels," *Seminar*, no. 550 (2005): XX.

[681] 2004-07: Six high-level visits, including Indian service chiefs of the Air Force (Nov. 2004 and Nov. 2006), Army (Oct. 2005), and Navy (Jan. 2006, May 2007), and the Defence Secretary (Sept. 2006). Several interviewees involved at the time underscore the pivotal influence of such excellent military-to-military relations: Adm. A. Prakash (016), Adm. S. Mehta (079), Gen. J. J. Singh (045) and Myanmar's ambassador, Brig.-Gen. U Kyi Thein (030). On his visit to Myanmar, in 2008, the chief of the Indian Army's Eastern Command recalls that "[the] Myanmarese were far more comfortable talking to a military delegation." V. K. Singh, *Courage and conviction: an autobiography* (New Delhi: Aleph, 2013), 276-7.

[682] In 2006-07, India allotted Myanmar 36 slots for defence training, the 3rd largest quota among 36 countries: MEA, "Annual Report 2006-07," (New Delhi 2007), 205. In 2006, Myanmar's Navy also participated for the first time in India's multilateral MILAN naval exercises. Indian defence supplies in 2006-07 included: a) 105 mm artillery guns + ammunition; b) a new IT cell for the Military Academy; c) 4 *Islander* aircrafts. Other assistance considered: T-94 tanks, *Dhruv* light helicopters, and a *Foxtrot*-class submarine: Interviews 016, 045, http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/tyagi-in-myanmar-to-push-arms-offer/17045; http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/myanmar-gets-india-s-maritime-aircraft/article1-222174.aspx; and Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1662.

matter," underlining that India had "a good relationship going [on] with Myanmar" and would surely "try to maintain that".[683] Similarly, Foreign Secretary S. Saran recalls that by 2006 India was finally "back in the [neighbor's] picture" and beginning to reap the benefits of its engagement policy.[684] By denouncing the regime and supporting the pro-democracy protests in September 2007, New Delhi would have terminated the generals' trust and cut itself out of Myanmar, once again.

Brothers in arms: cross-border cooperation in counterinsurgency

> *We value our growing military relations with Burma*[685]
>
> Gen. J. J. Singh, Indian Army Chief, September 2007

The second assessment driving India's cooperative posture during the 2007 crisis related to domestic security concerns: Myanmar's military regime had provided unprecedented assistance, which was seen as indispensable to ensure the continued success of India's counter-insurgency strategy in its Northeastern border states.

For the first time in more than half a century, the situation in India's border region had stabilized since the early 2000s, especially in the states of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, after several cease-fires and declining levels of violence.[686] But rather than ending the concerns of Indian security officials dealing with the region, this only shifted

---

[683] Quoted in http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1905543/posts

[684] FS S. Saran (Interview 028).

[685] Quoted in late Sept. 2007: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7013975.stm

[686] The Indian government signed cease-fires with the two main factions of Naga insurgency, the NSCN-IM (1997, extended indefinitely in July 2007), and the NSCN-K (in 2001). Between 2001 and 2006, according to official figures: a) violent incidents stagnated around 1,300/year; b) fatalities of security personnel decreased from 175 to 76; and c) civilians fatalities decreased from 660 to 309: Sanjoy Hazarika and V. R. Raghavan, eds., *Conflicts in the Northeast: internal and external effects* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2011), 11.

them across the 1,600 km-long and porous border, to Northern Myanmar, which hosted an increasing number of insurgent splinter groups that refused to engage in negotiations with New Delhi.[687] India was also increasingly troubled about the region's pivotal role in a flourishing network of transnational crime, especially in arms and narcotics trafficking, and as a staging ground for Islamic terrorism.[688]

New Delhi thus saw the security in its border regions to depend on regime stability in Myanmar and, in particular, on the *Tatmadaw*'s capacity to extend control along its side of the border.[689] Accordingly, India's main concern was that an abrupt regime change or collapse in Myanmar would weaken state capacity – especially the Army's – and that the consequent instability could spillover to India.[690]

At the height of the 2007 crisis, PM M. Singh thus cautioned that Myanmar had an "important bearing on our own country as a number of insurgent groups take advantage of the instability in Myanmar to indulge in unlawful activities in our North East," and that "therefore we have a strong interest in a stable, prosperous and peaceful

---

[687] In June 2006, a U.S. cable thus quotes India's DCM in Yangon, M. Bharti: "India's chief concern is that insurgent groups maintain camps in Burma from which they conduct cross-border actions in India." https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06RANGOON777_a.html. See also March 2005 visit by EAM K. N. Singh: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05RANGOON379_a.html.

[688] See e.g. role of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in Myanmar and Bangladesh: Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast*, 182-203. On arms trafficking into India, after the United Wa State Army begins manufacturing replicas of PLA rifles in Eastern Myanmar, see Lintner, *Great game*, 163-70. After 2001, Indian officials were also increasingly concerned about Islamic extremist organizations using the Myanmar-Bangladesh-Assam hub to operate in India, according to the former RAW representative in Burma, P. Heblikar (Interview 047), and NSA M. K. Narayanan (077).

[689] Myanmar's ambassador to India, Brig.-Gen. U Kyi Thein, recalls this drove Indian officials' approach, based on "overlapping areas of security interest" between both countries (Interview 030).

[690] For earlier definitions of the link between Myanmar's regime stability and Indian security, see Dixit, *Neighbours*, 330; I. P. Khosla, "Myanmar: Cohesion and Liberalism," *Strategic Analysis* 21, no. 1 (1998). For concerns about a sudden regime change in 2006, see Indian ambassador B. K. Mitra as quoted by the U.S. CdA: "India fears chaos on its borders, especially if [abrupt regime] change results in a chain of ethnic mini-states along India's border," https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06RANGOON612_a.html.

Myanmar."[691] More than a lethargic refusal or inability to embrace change, New Delhi's 2007 decision to engage the regime was thus rooted in three strategic assessments about the SPDC's positive impact on Indian domestic security.

The first positive impact was assessed to be indirect, deriving from the regime's successful counterinsurgency strategy. Despite continued challenges, a vast military modernization program in the 1990s had improved the *Tatmadaw*'s training and equipment, allowing it to gain the upper hand on a myriad of ethnic insurgencies and non-state armed groups hitherto operating freely.[692] Simultaneously, after 1989 the generals had also developed a variety of political inducements, which resulted in a series of cease-fires that successfully disarmed, demobilized, and rehabilitated 35 out of 40 insurgent groups.[693] While New Delhi remained skeptical about the SPDC's capacity to promote "national reconciliation" through a constitutional convention initiated by the generals in 2004, it was comforted by the domestic security returns it derived from unprecedented stability in Myanmar, and was also encouraged by the prospects of a wider peace process.[694]

The second, and more important, positive impact of the military regime's continuity in 2007 was deemed to be direct: Yangon was increasingly willing to cooperate and

---

[691] Nov. 20: Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 395.

[692] Myanmar's Army had launched various offensives on the NSCN-K in recent years, especially in the Spring of 2007. For a good overview, see Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar armed forces since 1948* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

[693] For a good overview of Myanmar's counter-insurgency strategy and the peace process since the 1990s: http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Publications/Catalyzing_Reflections_2_2014_online.pdf 11-12. In Jan. 2007, the Army signed a ceasefire with a breakaway KNA faction, and in March it began the first-ever talks with CNO/Chin rebels: http://unpo.org/article/6418, both of which seen as positive indications in India.

[694] See e.g. the Indian DCM's recognition, in 2007, that cross-border security was a chief concern in relations: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07RANGOON135_a.html. The Indian Army was thus the main advocate for engagement. This emphasized the Myanmar Army's expansion from 5 to 32 infantry battalions, many of which deployed to the Indian and Bangladesh borders, as "a positive development," according to D. Banerjee, "Myanmar and Indian Security concerns," *Strategic Analysis* 19, no. 5 (1996): 698. Indian Army Chiefs V. P. Malik and J. J. Singh recall the informal influence their assessments had on India's posture (Interviews 059 and 045).

coordinate with India to counter cross-border security challenges, and proved to be a reliable partner. Embryonic attempts to increase coordination in border patrolling and counter-insurgency operations had been made after 1994, but mostly failed due to a mix of Myanmar's deep-rooted isolationism and India's democratic politics.[695]

The breakthrough came with strategic normalization in 2000, after which the Indian Army and *Tatmadaw* started to cooperate more regularly.[696] While this collaboration was kept secret, New Delhi publically signaled its satisfaction and expectation of continuity, PM M. Singh, for example, noting in 2005 that he had been personally "assured [by Tan Shwe] that [the] Myanmar Government will fully cooperate with India and not allow its territory to be used by insurgents."[697]

Look East and counter China

The third and final assessment driving India's supportive stance towards the military regime in Myanmar related to a dual geostrategic imperative: to connect with Southeast Asia and to counterbalance China. While Indian officials dealing with Myanmar since the 1990s have been described as "obsessed" with China, allegedly suffering from an

---

[695] Aug. 1993: agreement on border patrolling,. May 1994: B. C. Joshi the first Indian Army Chief to visit Myanmar since 1986, which led to a coordinated cross-border operation in May 1995. Aug. 1995: agreement on cross-border cooperation against insurgents and trafficking. Feb. 1998, "Operation Leech": India kills six and arrests 36 Myanmar insurgents on the Andaman & Nicobar islands: Nandita Haksar, *Rogue agent: how India's military intelligence betrayed the Burmese resistance* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009).

[696] This started at the Shillong talks, in Jan. 2000: V. P. Malik recalls sharing intelligence on NSCN-K camps in Northern Myanmar with the SPDC's no. 2, Maung Aye, and the *Tatmadaw* raided the camps two weeks later: Malik, "Indo-Myanmar," 4-7. The *Tatmadaw* launched regular offensives thereafter, e. g. in 2001 on Manipuri PLA insurgents: Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast*, 177. India started fencing the border with Myanmar in 2003: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 779. Insurgency and other cross-border security challenges were also addressed at the bi-annual Army Border liaison meetings, or the annual dialogue of Home Secretaries: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 940-1.

[697] Dec. 14, after talks with Than Shwe: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 785. See also MEA, "AR 07-08," 10.

"encirclement syndrome," a closer examination indicates that New Delhi's China focus in Myanmar was not myopic nor reactionary, but based on three strategic assessments and objectives.[698]

In the first assessment, after India embraced economic reforms in the 1990s, Myanmar assumed a pivotal role as a link to the high-growth economies of Southeast Asia.[699] While China was arguably driving India's consequent Look East policy, it was also based on the recognition that Myanmar's economic liberalization could have a stabilizing impact on India's semi-enclaved Northeastern states.[700] Indian policymakers therefore identified Myanmar as the pivot of their new geoeconomic reorientation strategy.[701]

Speaking in Bangladesh, in 2005, India's senior-most diplomat in charge of this new policy, thus emphasized that "Myanmar and the Northeast Region provide the geographical contiguity for overland connectivity between India and ASEAN."[702] Similarly, the "Vision 2020" strategy of the Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region, emphasized that "it is in North East India that South-East Asia begins

---

[698] Egreteau, *Wooing the generals: India's new Burma policy*, 192. The Indian Ambassador S. Saran (1997-2000) recalls: "India had to focus on its comparative advantage, and waited to explore its window of opportunity in 2000s, when Myanmar reached out, saturated with China and under American pressure" (Interview 028).

[699] See e.g. Finance Minister M. Singh's first major speech on reforms, in Oct. 1991, in Singapore: Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009), 260.

[700] On the China and Myanmar factors in India's "Look East" policy, see Ram, *Two Decades*. On the specific role of India's Northeastern states and Myanmar, see B. G. Verghese, *Reorienting India: the new geo-politics of Asia* (New Delhi: Konark, 2001).

[701] The 1990s saw a gradual economic opening of the country, starting in 1993, when foreign banks were first allowed to operate. Arriving in 1997, the Indian ambassador recalls that "there was change in the air," as Myanmar was about to enter ASEAN, and "a general expectation that Myanmar too, would, in time graduate to the Southeast Asian model of liberal economy and mild political authoritarianism," Shyam Saran, "Re-Engaging the Neighbouhood: A personal perspective on India's look east policy," in *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy: Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity*, ed. Amar N. Ram (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 2012), 131.

[702] May 31, R. Sikri (Secretary, East), in Dhaka: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 84. See also MEA, "AR 04-05," 12.

and, as such, it is for the North East to be enabled to play the arrow-head role in the further evolution of this policy."[703]

From the mid-1990s, New Delhi persistently tried to strengthen this connectivity. It pushed for greater commercial exchanges and the opening of new overland trade routes.[704] It invested massively in new road and transportation projects, seeking to facilitate mobility across one of the Asia's most isolated borders.[705] It unveiled ambitious gas and oil pipeline projects, via Bangladesh, to integrate their energy markets.[706] And on the diplomatic front, it encouraged Myanmar to join a variety of multilateral initiatives for regional integration.[707] Economic connectivity thus drove strategy, and strategy, in turn, dictated continued engagement with the military regime.

India's second geostrategic assessment saw Myanmar's increasing anxiety about excessive reliance on China as an opportunity to expand its footprint. India had natural security concerns about China.[708] However, rather than reflecting an obsessive quest to compete with Beijing, as often argued, New Delhi's post-2000 rapprochement was driven by an

---

[703] http://www.mdoner.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo2_content/ner_vision/Vision_2020.pdf p. vi-vii.

[704] The border trade agreement was signed in 1994, with the first overland route opened in Apr. 1995. While total bilateral trade increased, its share remained insignificant, at US$10 million (0,9%) in 2008: Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 174-9. Contrast with China: US$1.2 billion (50%), Myoe, *Pauk-Phaw*, 158.

[705] In Feb. 2001, EAM J. Singh inaugurated the India-Myanmar Friendship Road, part of the Trilateral Highway Project with Thailand, formalized in 2002. Negotiations were ongoing for the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Facility negotiated, leading to an MoU in 2008. India also expressed interest in exploring the Dawei deep sea port and building a cross-border rail link Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1663.

[706] In 2005, EAM N. Singh, compared the India-Bangladesh-Myanmar pipeline project to the Mughal construction of the Grand Trunk Road across India, "to link our region and set up a new paradigm in regional cooperation and friendship" Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 18, 432-4. See also MEA, "AR 04-05," 12.

[707] In 1992, it rejoined the Non-Aligned Movement with Indian support. In 1997, Myanmar joined BIMS-TEC at India's invitation. In 2000, at India's behest, Myanmar became a founding member of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation Initiative. Finally, in 2007, under India's presidency, Myanmar expressed interest in becoming a SAARC observer state (formalized in 2008).

[708] R. Sikri, MEA's Secretary (East, 2004-06) recalls: "should Myanmar get irreversibly locked in China's tight economic and strategic embrace, this would pose serious security dangers to India". Sikri, *Challenge and strategy: rethinking India's foreign policy*, 66.

understanding that Myanmar was finally ready to recalibrate its Sino-Indian balancing strategy.[709]

On his arrival as India's ambassador in Yangon, in 1997, S. Saran recalls:

> *There was a strong urge [by the SPDC] to reduce its overwhelming dependence on China (…) They were keen to regain a degree of strategic autonomy (…) From having been largely on the sidelines since 1989, India was able to deal itself back into reckoning in a strategically important neighbouring state within the space of just a few years. By providing room for manouvre to the generals in Yangon, we were able to expand our own.[710]*

From the late 1990s onwards, Indian officials thus observed a persistent concern by Myanmar's military regime to rope New Delhi in to balance China, whether by allowing India to re-open its consulate in Mandalay or grating it privileged economic access in the borderlands West of the Irrawaddy or Chin rivers.[711] By 2004, even Khin Nyunt, the SPDC's No. 3 and most pro-China figure, was seen by New Delhi as a "changed man … going out of his way to woo India."[712] After he was ousted in a purge later that year, India's Foreign Secretary K. Sibal confirmed: "Myanmar is keen to balance its external relationships and India has vital long term interest in increasing Myanmar's strategic options."[713]

---

[709] A former Myanmar Foreign Affairs director-general on the historical driver behind Yangon's rapprochement after 2000: "For a small nation like Myanmar wedged between two giant neighbors there is little choice but to engage them in a balanced manner," Shein, "India-Myanmar Relations after 2010 Elections," 18. In an undated brief on "our interest" while he served as Myanmar's ambassador to India (2003-07), Brig.-Gen. U Kyi Thein refers to his country as "a bridge between India and China … situated in the strategic location geo-politically and economically" (shared with the author). This is shared by his predecessor, Amb. U Wynn Lwin (1992-1999), who noted that Myanmar had been deprived of this second axis after India took on a pro-democracy posture in 1988 (Interview 060).

[710] Saran, "Re-Engaging," 135.

[711] On the consulate, opened despite Chinese opposition, see Saran, "Re-Engaging," 135-6. Several Indian officials interviewed recall implicit SPDC attempts to divide Indian and Chinese zones of influence, along those two rivers, leaving the Eastern areas to China: interviews with Army Chiefs V. P. Malik (059) and J. J. Singh (045), Ambassador R. Bhatia (004), and Foreign Secretary S. Saran (028).

[712] Foreign Secretary S. Saran, quoted in Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 109.

[713] Jan. 23, 2003: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 75. Three months after going on his eight visit to China in seven years, signing 12 agreements, the SPDC's No.3 Khin Nyunt is arrested in October, five days before a major state

In India's third and final geostrategic assessment, growing American and European pressure against Myanmar would drive the regime even further into Chinese hands. Conversely, New Delhi expected its continued engagement to be rewarded with greater leverage over an increasingly isolated regime. After 2003, the SPDC generals began expressing acute concern about the need to escape rising pressure from the West and the consequent need to diversify their strategic relations.[714]

Yangon had good reasons to worry. The USA tightened sanctions, opposed Myanmar's entry into ASEAN, and in 2005 its Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, reviled "Burma" as an "outpost of tyranny."[715] The European Union, unusually led by the United Kingdom, intensified its economic and diplomatic coercion.[716] And together, after 2005, Western states brought up Myanmar more regularly at the United Nations, both at the Security Council and the Human Rights Commission.[717]

In late 2005, India's Ambassador in Yangon, B. K. Mitra, recognized that "in principle, India can't take exception to the U.S. and E.U. policies of applying pressure on the

---

visit by Than Shwe and Maung Aye to India. On how this purge was expected to favor India, see Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 109, 201; Egreteau and Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy* 185-202, 51-2.

[714] See e.g. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03RANGOON167_a.html. On Khin Nyunt's particular concern about the United States: "in order to prevent our country from getting into trouble and make it stable, we have to associate with the *Kala* [Indians] and the Chinese," Dec. 2003 quoted in https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04RANGOON647_a.html

[715] Jan. 2005: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4186241.stm. See also her May 29, 2006 speech: http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/67045.htm. American pressures included a "visa ban" in 1996, prohibition of new investment in 1997, and diplomatic pressure against Myanmar taking on the ASEAN chairmanship, in 2005. In Oct. 2005, the U.S. CdA notes that the "promotion of democracy in Burma is this mission's top priority," https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05RANGOON1177_a.html.

[716] The EU first adopted a Common Position on Burma in 1996, which was revised and strengthened in 2004, with continued restrictions on visas and development assistance, denial of GSP privileges, and a total arms embargo. In 2004, it also opposed Myanmar joining the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/81897.pdf

[717] In Dec. 2005, the United States first attempted to include Myanmar on the UNSC's formal agenda, which it succeeds in doing in Sept. 2006 with recourse to a controversial procedural vote, despite Indian opposition: http://www.freeburmacoalition.org/derekonunsc.htm. See also the Jan. 2007 attempt to adopt a UNSC resolution condemning Myanmar: http://www.un.org/press/en/2007/sc8939.doc.htm.

Burmese regime."[718] However, in practice, it was equally clear that given its security and economic interests, India could not afford the Western luxury of a moral stance.[719] New Delhi's chief concern was that such pressures were proving to be counterproductive and that sanctions, in particular, would hurt its attempts to pre-empt China from getting "free access" to Myanmar.[720]

Indian officials were therefore privately puzzled by the question "whether the US denied [neglected], or deliberately chose to ignore the strategic importance of Myanmar in Southeast Asia," and "whether it cared at all that its [coercive] policy would drive Burma closer into China's arms".[721] However, while in public Washington often berated New Delhi's engagement policy, it privately acknowledged that it "may serve U.S. interests in terms of providing a counterbalance to China's increasing influence in Burma."[722]

*

Looking back at the revolutionary changes in India-Myanmar relations over the preceding decade, Foreign Secretary R. Mathai hinted in 2012 at a sense of glee and vindication:

> *When you are a neighbouring country you do not have the choice [to disengage] (…). You remain engaged irrespective of the situation. (…) this [India-Myanmar] relationship has continued*

---

[718] Quoted in U.S. Embassy cable: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05RANGOON1199_a.html.

[719] India's FS (until Sept. 2006), recalls that in India's view, the United States was pursuing a "low cost policy of moral high-ground" (Interview 028). An Indian official dealing with the UN at the time recalls: "[it was] easy for the West to adopt a strong position on Myanmar. If something similar happened in Namibia, I could also afford to take a strong moral stance, [but] you can't choose your neighbors." (Interview 076).

[720] FS S. S. Menon (2006-09): interview no. 078.

[721] R. Bhatia, Ambassador in Yangon (2002-05): Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 65.

[722] U.S. Chief of Mission Martinez, in 2003, after talking to the Indian Ambassador: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03RANGOON1117_a.html. India's FS S. Saran recalls his interaction on Myanmar with U.S. NSA S. Hadley, in Dec. 2005: "[he gave me a] lecture, on 'how can you do this, be in bed with generals, you can't do this as a democracy' (…) so I gave him a tutorial on Indian interests, border security, ASEAN link, Bay of Bengal. And you talk about China being a major concern in MY, but we're in there. … they realized India's interests after that, and while rhetoric continued, [they] never pressured us to change our policy" (Interview 028).

through history. So, this is a matter on which we were very consistent. We may have had differences but we wanted always to be able to continue a dialogue as friendly, constructive partners.[723]

The 2007 "Saffron Revolution" posed the most significant challenge to the Indian government's "consistency", given the tremendous domestic and international pressures on the world's largest democracy to denounce the military regime. Beyond moral considerations, however, New Delhi pursued continued engagement, based on a triad of strategic assessments: 1) the SPDC remained firmly in power, and promised to continue granting India unprecedented access to Myanmar, which revolutionized bilateral relations; 2) for the first time in over half a century, the increasingly capable *Tatmadaw* had gained the upper hand over its myriad of ethnic insurgencies, and by actively cooperating with the Indian Army against cross-border security threats, it proved indispensable to the stabilization in India's Northeaster border states; and 3) in order to reduce dependence on China and fend off Western pressures, the generals were cultivating India, which offered a geostrategic window of opportunity for New Delhi to expand its presence in Myanmar, connect with Southeast Asia, and improve its external security.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the assessments that drove India's different postures during regime crises in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar in the 2000s: in Nepal, New Delhi pursued a coercive strategy against King Gyanendra's illiberal royal regime, supported pro-democracy forces and facilitated regime change, which in 2006 ended ten years of

---

[723] May 25: Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2012* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2013), 1173-4.

civil war with a Maoist insurgency; in Sri Lanka, faced with an escalating civil war, New Delhi engaged the existing political dispensation, under President M. Rajapaksa, supporting his military offensive that defeated the separatist Tamil insurgency in 2009; and in Myanmar, New Delhi fully engaged the SPDC military regime while its generals crushed pro-democracy forces in 2007.

As highlighted in the case of Nepal, India did not just spontaneously engage each regime, irrespective of its political system or specific circumstances, despite what its policymakers often seem to profess in public: New Delhi's different postures were the outcome of evolving strategic assessments about each specific crisis and about the expected effect engagement or coercion would have on India's future influence and security interests in the neighboring country. While the broader patterns of these assessments is analyzed in detail in the following conclusion to Part 1, a few tentative conclusions can be drawn from this period, in specific:

1. As in the preceding six cases examined in the 1950s and 1980s, India's posture during neighboring regime crises in the 2000s was determined by strategic assessments that focused on maximizing political influence and security, rather than on ideational inclinations or hegemonic reflexes. The following three assessments prevail:

   a) The relative strength of the prevailing regime and its attitude towards India, whether cooperative (cases of Sri Lanka and Myanmar), non-cooperative or hostile (case of Nepal): "Work with, not against us" is a common and cardinal appeal from Indian officials to neighboring governments, especially during crises. The extent to which India's engagement policy was shaped by Sri Lanka's "India first" policy after 2006 contrasts with the extent to which New Delhi's coercive policy was

shaped about the converse assessment about Nepal's balancing attempts, especially

after 2005, to reduce and escape Indian influence.

b) The internal crisis dynamics in each country, this being the first time in its history

that the Indian government faced high levels of political violence (civil war,

insurgencies) simultaneously in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, all of which

having a cross-border impact on domestic security, particularly in India's border

regions. The risks of escalation or stalemate, and the quest for stability and order,

induced India into supporting different conflict resolution strategies (negotiation in

Nepal, force in Sri Lanka). India's foreign posture and policy therefore often reflect

its domestic counter-insurgency objectives and strategy.

c) The geostrategic context of each regime crisis, in particular the alignment of the

political dispensation (cooperative towards India, or seeking to balance India via

extra-regional powers) and also the postures of other great powers (especially

China, the United States and other Western states) towards the crisis state. China's

new inroads into South Asia during the 2000s assume particular salience,

decreasing India's incentives to coerce the regimes in Sri Lanka and Myanmar,

which were able to increasingly rely on support from Beijing. Engagement thus

became of paramount geostrategic importance to counter China, except in cases

(such as Nepal) where geographic conditions and predominant capabilities

preserved India's coercive power.

2. While strategic assessments were primarily driven by the quest for political influence

and security, there are also significant indications that Indian policymakers recognized

the importance of a regime fostering liberal and democratic political processes to solve

domestic conflicts, whether in the case of Nepal's Maoist, Sri Lanka's Tamil or Myanmar's Kachin insurgencies. In all cases, India's assessments thus focus on the existing regime's capability to adequately implements India's prescribed dual counter-insurgency track, calibrating military force and political inducements, and the outcome on the country's domestic stability, order and security. Conversely, as reflected in the divergent cases of Nepal (Maoists willing to cooperate and join the democratic process) and Sri Lanka (LTTE unwilling, instead persisting in violent secession), India's assessments also evaluate the insurgents' posture towards conflict resolution, as well as towards India and its domestic security concerns.

3. The three cases in the 2000s furthermore reflect the rising salience of economic concerns in India's assessments, as traditionally introvert security considerations are linked to, or are subject to extrovert geo-economic priorities: particularly in the case of Myanmar (and to a certain extent also Sri Lanka), India's crisis posture is influenced by the new, extrovert nature of its liberal economy, requiring greater connectivity with Southeast Asia (and other neighboring regions), which in turn is incompatible with chronic lawlessness and insecurity in cross-border regions.

4. Finally, despite public rhetoric often suggesting otherwise, India's geostrategic assessments in the 2000s indicate an unprecedented degree of dialogue, coordination and even cooperation with the United States during regime crises in Nepal, Sri Lanka and even Myanmar (where New Delhi and Washington's postures clashed more intensely). However, as reflected in the cases of Sri Lanka and Myanmar, American and Western liberal-interventionist agendas and coercive postures have often forced India to pursue a extraordinarily fine balance, seeking to preserve its own leverage to nudge neighboring

258

regimes towards political change, even while forced to compete with China's unconditional, long-distance, and "no-strings-attached" support for illiberal regimes.

CONCLUSION TO PART I: PATTERNS OF INVOLVEMENT

Safeguarding these [Indian liberal democratic] values for one seventh of humanity is far more important than to be in agreement with our smaller neighbours at some cost to our system.[724]

K. Subrahmanyam, 1981

In order to "safeguard" the survival of its democratic system in a volatile, mostly authoritarian, and at times also hostile neighborhood, the Indian state has compromised on every possible principle and employed a variety of strategies. The nine case studies examined in this first part of the dissertation (chapters 2, 3 and 4) illustrate this crudely pragmatic strategic culture: depending on the circumstances of each crisis, while New Delhi sometimes responded with inaction, it often also violated the norm of non-interference to get involved, whether by micromanaging its neighbors' internal politics or through coercing regime change, including through military intervention.

As illustrated in Table 6, democratic India's posture does not appear to be directly correlated to the formal regime type (democratic or autocratic) in the crisis country: depending on the circumstances of each crisis, New Delhi has at times engaged and supported deeply authoritarian regimes, and at least in one instance (Sri Lanka 1987) coerced a formally democratic regime.

Table 6: Regime type and Indian posture

Crisis	Regime type	Indian posture

---

[724] Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 261.

Nepal 1960	Authoritarian (incoming: royal rule after coup)	Engagement
Ceylon 1956	Democracy (contested: declining pluralism)	Engagement
Burma 1962	Authoritarian (incoming: military rule after coup)	Engagement
Nepal 1990	Authoritarian (contested: pro-democracy uprising)	Coercion
Sri Lanka 1987	Democracy (contested: declining pluralism)	Coercion
Burma 1988	Authoritarian (contested: pro-democracy uprising)	Coercion
Nepal 2006	Authoritarian (contested: pro-democracy uprising)	Coercion
Sri Lanka 2009	Democracy (contested: declining pluralism)	Engagement
Myanmar 2007	Authoritarian (contested: pro-democracy uprising)	Engagement

The findings also do not indicate any clear temporal patterns, dismissing popular narratives about the evolutionary transformation of an initial "soft" Indian state of the 1950s, favoring non-interference and engagement, into a "hard" Indian state of the 2000s, favoring greater involvement and coercion: Chapter 2 (1950s-60) shows that the supposedly "idealist" PM J. Nehru pragmatically engaged the authoritarian or illiberal regimes of royal Nepal, ethno-nationalist Ceylon and praetorian Burma; Chapter 3 (1980s), in turn, suggests that the coercive involvement of PM R. Gandhi in the three neighboring states was driven by concerns about regime stability and regional security; and, finally, Chapter 4 (2000s) indicates a mixed approach, under PM M. Singh, with engagement in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, and coercion in Nepal.

Finally, the nine case studies do not indicate the determinant influence of any of the other factors frequently employed as simplistic single-cause explanations of India's neighborhood policy: 1) India's relative capacity to interfere or coerce has not changed

dramatically over sixty years, remaining high in Nepal, medium Sri Lanka, and limited in Myanmar; 2) Organizational differences within or between the government's various branches matter occasionally, but more on degree of involvement, than on the rather consensual crisis assessments and objectives of India's posture; 3) Political parties like to publically claim grand ideological differences, but when in power they have pursued common objectives through identical strategies; 4) Similarly, the role of Prime Ministers and their idiosyncrasies is frequently overrated, when individual leadership has, in practice, never played a determinant role in India's crisis assessment and posture.

If not all these, what factors, then, determine India's posture during a neighboring state's regime crisis? In the introduction to this part of the dissertation, the objective was to unpack the usual short and broad answer of reflexive "security interests" overriding "moral values." What *specific* concerns shape the direction and degree of each and every Indian crisis posture? India's assessments in all nine case studies converge around three determinant types: 1) Regime strength and attitude (dispensation); 2) Conflict spillover risk (order); and 3) Extra-regional influence (geopolitics). Table 7 offers a summary.

Table 7: Assessment types influencing crisis posture

Types Crisis (Posture)	1. Regime strength and attitude (dispensation): Regime capability and attitude towards India; eventual alternatives.	2. Conflict spillover risk (order): Conflict's cross-border effects on Indian domestic security.	3. Extra-regional influence (geopolitics): Geopolitical environment and influence of extra-regional powers.
Nepal 1960 (Engagement)	- Democratic regime fragmenting, less capable and cooperative - Rising political activism of King Mahendra as an inevitable alternative	- Communism (limited)	- Rising threat assessment of China and border conflict - Sino-Nepalese rapprochement

Ceylon 1956 (Engagement)	- Outgoing UNP deemed conservative and unfavorable to India - Incoming SLFP deemed progressive and cooperative towards India	- Stateless "Plantation" Tamils of Indian origin (limited)	- SLFP re-association with India and non-alignment, tilt away from USA/West
Burma 1962 (Engagement)	- U Nu and democratic government's growing isolation and incapability - Rising influence of Gen. Ne Win and the Army, positive assessment of his caretaker govt.	- Burmese Army more willing and capable to counter cross-border insurgencies - Indian diaspora threatened by *Burmanization* policies (limited)	- Rising threat assessment of China and border conflict - Sino-Burmese rapprochement
Nepal 1990 (Coercion)	- King Birendra hostile, cuts down channels of communication - Democratic parties favoring Indian influence	- Rising unrest and political protests (limited)	- King Birendra's extra-regional balancing strategy (especially China)
Sri Lanka 1987 (Coercion)	- Pres. Jayawardene non-cooperative, rejects Indian advice and pursues military offensive - No credible, pliant, reformist government alternative	- Conflict escalation and spillover effect on Tamil Nadu	- Colombo's extra-regional balancing strategy (USA, China) - Conflict internationalization and escalation
Burma 1988 (Coercion)	- Ne Win's regime isolated, weak, and non-cooperative - Pro-democracy parties favored India	- Burmese Army's incapability and unwillingness to cooperate in counter-insurgency operations	- Rangoon's rising alignment with China and disinterest in regional economic integration
Nepal 2006 (Coercion)	- King Gyanendra non-cooperative, refuses Indian advice and hostile post-2005 - Democratic parties and Maoist insurgents' outreach to India	- Maoist insurgency's cross-border links with Indian Left-wing extremists - Risk of conflict escalation and/or chronic stalemate: instability	- King Gyanendra's extra-regional balancing strategy (China, USA), esp. post-2005
Sri Lanka 2009 (Engagement)	- Colombo's cooperative "India first" initiative, commitment to deliver - Intractable and hostile LTTE, rejects peace process, committed to secessionism	- Spillover threat of radicalizing LTTE's military tactics and post-defeat strategy - Risk of continued conflict and chronic disorder	- Limited Chinese military support, monitored - Counter-productive Western pressure and risk of interventionism
Myanmar 2007 (Engagement)	- SPDC regime entrenched, cooperative, delivering - Post-2000 revolutionary improvement in bilateral relations in progress	- *Tatmadaw*'s successful counter-insurgency strategy, stability - Unprecedented cross-border security/military cooperation	- Balance Chinese presence, Indian Ocean access - Expand geo-economic links to Southeast Asia

<u>Dispensation: regime strength and attitude</u>

This is the most typical crisis assessment influencing India's posture, reflecting far more sophistication than a reflexive engagement of any political dispensation (regime).

- Definition: Assessment of the balance of power in the crisis country, based on prevailing regime's strength (robust/weak) and attitude towards India (cooperative/hostile).

- Policy-maker questions: How strongly entrenched is the existing regime, and what is the likelihood of it surviving the crisis and remaining in power? Does it cooperate and address Indian concerns, or at least attempt and promise to do so? Are there credible alternatives (internal factions, opposition) for a regime change that would favor India's interests and political influence?

- Influence on posture: India tends to engage regimes that are strong and/or cooperative, and tend to coerce regimes that are weak and/or hostile. Particularly during crises periods, New Delhi will verge towards coercion when neighboring regimes a) persistently fail to accommodate Indian concerns, close down channels of communication, reject normalization attempts, or mobilize popular support against India; and b) are weak and contested, with a credible regime alternative offering India greater guarantees of cooperation and influence.

- Cases: Myanmar 2007 (strong regime: engagement), Myanmar 1988 (weak regime: coercion); Nepal 1990 (hostile regime: coercion) and Sri Lanka 2009 (cooperative regime: engagement).

- Change: This is a key Indian assessment reflecting persistent continuity during every neighboring regime crisis, from the 1950s until today. While the instruments

employed to pursue different postures have changed, the typical cost-benefit assessment of a neighboring country's political dispensation remains the same.

Order: conflict spillover risk

This typical assessment reflects a strategic understanding that India's domestic security, order and stability are intrinsically tied to that of its neighbors.

- Definition: Assessment about the neighboring country's crisis/conflict risk of escalation and cross-border repercussions of such disorder/instability on Indian domestic security (low / high).

- Policy-maker questions: What is the likelihood of the crisis/conflict affecting India's domestic security, stability and order, in particular in its border regions? How intense are cross-border ties (ethnic solidarity, political and financial support, insurgent and criminal operations)? How is the crisis expected to influence the neighbor's domestic order and stability? Will a regime change exacerbate or mitigate the neighbor's internal conflict? Will it hamper or help Indian efforts to counter cross-border security threats?

- Influence on posture: When facing a neighboring crisis (especially a militarized conflict) with a high-risk spillover effect on India's domestic security, decision-makers prioritize stability and order. Coupled with the first typical assessment (dispensation) on the existing regime's relative strength and attitude towards India, New Delhi will therefore tend to a) engage a regime that commits to counter cross-border security threats, deliver on stability and conflict resolution in

265

cooperation with India; and b) coerce a regime that is incapable and/or unwilling to cooperate with India in addressing cross-border security threats, deliver on stability and conflict resolution.

- Cases: Myanmar 1962 and 2007 (high risk + cooperation = engagement); Sri Lanka 1987, Myanmar 1988, Nepal 2006 (high risk + non-cooperation: coercion)

- Change: a) from territorially-based insurgent groups towards greater emphasis on non-traditional security threats (transnational terrorism, crime) taking advantage of disorder in neighboring countries to operate in and against India; and b) from border states as vulnerable buffers required to protect the autarchic economic order from external trade and influences (up to the 1980s), to an extrovert focus on border regions as connecting hubs that promote regional integration and economic linkages (e.g. with South East Asia, Indian Ocean after the 1990s).

Geopolitics: extra-regional influence

This typical assessment reflects the subjection of all neighboring states' internal affairs to India's geostrategic objective of insulating the region from hostile and rival powers.

- Definition: Assessment about the neighboring regime's geopolitical alignment and the risk of hostile/competing extra-regional powers exploiting the crisis to expand their leverage (high / low).
- Policy-maker questions: Does the crisis result from, or propitiate greater involvement from extra-regional powers, particularly hostile ones, such as China? Will competing/rival extra-regional influences internationalize and escalate an

existing conflict, and thus reduce India's influence and leverage to end it? What is the existing regime's geopolitical alignment, and does it respect Indian geostrategic and external security concerns?

- Influence on posture: Coupled with the first and second typical assessment (dispensation and order), New Delhi will tend to a) engage a regime that it sees as cooperatively aligning its foreign policy to India's external security concerns, or at least committed not to override them; and b) coerce a regime that it sees as either neglecting Indian geostrategic concerns or actively seeking to balance India by roping in the support from extra-regional powers.

- Cases: Sri Lanka 1987 and Nepal 1990 (Balancing policies/internationalization risk = coercion); Sri Lanka 1956, Myanmar 2007, and Sri Lanka 2009 (cooperative alignment = engagement).

- Change: This typical geopolitical assessment reflects strategic adaptation to different countries and to changes in the regional and global security environment. For example: a) in the late 1950s, Indian threat assessments focus on China in Nepal and in Burma, and on the United States/Western influence in Ceylon; b) as the threat assessment from China intensifies, from the late 1950s onwards, India's relation with the United States in third countries in South Asia gradually move from passive hostility (1960s-70s), to mutual respect and non-interference (1980s) and finally to unprecedented dialogue, coordination and cooperation (2000s).

*

Dispensation (regime strength and attitude), order (effects on domestic security) and geopolitics (extra-regional influence): together, these three typical strategic assessments examined in this first part of the dissertation reflect a clear and continuous pattern of how India responds to regime crises in its neighborhood. Together, these three assessments guide Indian policymakers to set objectives, take decisions and determine India's crisis posture, whether one of inaction or intervention, engagement or coercion. More than any other factor, dispensation, order and geopolitics serve as the only key to decode when, why and how New Delhi gets involved in a neighboring state's crisis.

Returning to the broader, theoretical objective of this dissertation, we are now also in a position to conclude that the patterns in India's crisis assessments and posture reflect a distinct strategic culture. It is important to recall that while examining India's decision-making in the nine case studies we refrained from taking the benefit of hindsight, thus refusing to either justify or legitimize India's posture or, on the other hand, to condemn its limited success or failure in achieving desired outcomes.

Part I identified and described an Indian strategic culture of crisis response and involvement in its neighborhood, determined by three typical assessments (political dispensation, order, and geopolitics) serving the quest to preserve and maximize India's influence and security.

Part II proceeds to examine to what extent this strategic culture is also influenced by the democratic quality of the Indian political system and by a liberal approach to regime types. Rather than seeing democracy, and its associated liberal values and principles, as an opposite pole to strategy, Part II thus evaluates whether India's crisis assessments also reflect any causal relation between liberal democracy and security.

PART II – DEMOCRACY AS SECURITY: THE LIBERAL DIMENSION

India's "unilateral adherence to morality [non-interference] is neither desirable nor practical if another [neighbor] country deliberately indulges in policies which are immoral [illiberal] and which, at the same time, pose a [security] threat to you. In such a situation, practical corrective action has to be taken.[725]

J. N. Dixit, former Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor

Part I identified and described an Indian strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement determined by three typical assessments (*dispensation*, *order*, and *geopolitics*). By themselves, these three factors regulate the degree and direction of India's involvement in all nine case studies examined, across three different time periods.

However, in several cases, particular during the 1980s, such assessments also reflected an Indian understanding of how more or less liberal regime types can affect Indian interests in a cooperative relationship, domestic order and security, and geopolitical alignment of the neighboring country. For example, as apparent in the case of Sri Lanka (1987, in Chapter 3), Colombo's non-cooperative attitude, its persistent attempts to pursue a military solution to the ethnic conflict, and the gradual internationalization of the conflict were associated to the regime's illiberal identity, based on structural ethno-nationalism. Similarly, in the case of Nepal (2006, in Chapter 4) Indian assessments linked the return to royal autocracy to the regime's declining strength and increasing hostile attitude towards India.

---

[725] Dixit, *Across borders: Fifty years of India's foreign policy*, 163.

Part II of this dissertation thus moves on to examine when, why and how India's three cardinal strategic assessments take into account the particular regime type of the crisis country. For example, do Indian assessments recognize liberal democratic regimes as being more cooperative towards India, more capable to solve domestic conflicts, and less inclined to play extra-regional balancing games? Conversely, do Indian assessments see illiberal or authoritarian regimes in the neighborhood as more reliable counterparts, delivering more efficiently on India's domestic security concerns and geostrategic interests? Or is there a temporal trade-off, and Indian assessments caught in a dilemma between the short-term advantages of engaging illiberal regimes and the long-term promises of necessary liberalization?

As suggested by J. N. Dixit's quote above, India's propensity for regional involvement increases when a neighboring country "deliberately indulges in policies which are immoral [illiberal] and which, at the same time, pose a [security] threat to you." However euphemistic, the consequent "corrective action" Dixit suggests, is perhaps the closest definition of an Indian doctrine of liberal intervention.

To examine the liberal dimension in Indian strategic assessments and posture, Chapter 5 offers a broad overview of the role of democracy in Indian foreign policy, and then proceeds to examine to what extent India's exceptionalist identity and liberal domestic environment influence decision-making indirectly. Chapter 6 then offers the key argument of this dissertation, by linking liberal democracy to security and setting out under what short- and long-term conditions regime type influences India's assessments and posture towards neighboring crises.

CHAPTER 5 – LIBERAL EXPERIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT: THE DOMESTIC ROOTS

When we look at our extended neighbourhood we cannot but be struck by the fact that India is the only open pluralistic democratic society and rapidly modernizing market economy between the Mediterranean and the Pacific. This places a special responsibility upon us not only in the defence of our values but also in the search for a peaceful periphery.[726]

Prime Minister M. Singh (2006)

How is India's strategic thought towards the region shaped by its own trajectory and experience as a liberal democracy? Does its domestic environment, with freedom of expression and electoral competition, influence Indian strategic practice? This chapter offers an introduction to the domestic and liberal dimension in Indian foreign policy by examining to what extent Indian decision-makers focus on regime type when making assessments about crises in neighboring countries. The chapter is divided in two parts.

The first part provides an overview of the liberal dimension in Indian strategic thought. Beyond just moral righteousness, when Indian leaders express their principled support for democracy abroad, they do so for *causal* reasons, associating liberal regimes with greater stability and security. Reflecting their country's own successful trajectory in preserving territorial integrity and achieving economic development despite an ethno-linguistic and religious diversity, Indian leaders and decision-makers thus emphasize that their country's representative, decentralized and inclusive institutions are the best model to govern heterogeneous societies, and that political liberalization is therefore inevitable. While

---

[726] Oct. 18 at the Combined Commanders' Conference, quoted in Baru, *Accidental PM*, 169.

present since 1947, the influence of this causal link on Indian strategic thought has grown with time, fueling a rising sentiment of Indian exceptionalism in the region.

The second part of this chapter then proceeds to examine how India's domestic environment, with representative institutions, electoral competition, and a vibrant civil society, influences Indian strategic practice. A brief re-examination of our case studies from this angle indicates that there are various channels through which India's democratic society indirectly affects policy-making processes towards neighboring countries. While not determinant, such pressures play an auxiliary role by either accentuating or moderating the government's posture, for example by delaying a bilateral normalization process with an authoritarian regime or, conversely, accelerating a coercive posture that favors a democratic regime change.

1. Liberal Experience: the Exceptionalist Core of Strategic Thought

Indian officials frequently make broad statements in favor of liberal democracy, human rights and political freedom, and also exude a sense of exceptionalism, as indicated by PM M. Singh's introductory quote to this chapter. The fact that this preference does not always affect India's posture, nor is always clearly articulated in public, is often mistaken for its inexistence or irrelevance in decision-making. However, whether India coerces democracies or engages authoritarian regimes in the neighborhood, its officials always identify instinctively with democratic forces and even describe political liberalization as a teleological inevitability.

<u>a) Principled support and its causal sources</u>

Despite Western criticism and while not always translated into practice, Indian leaders have never shied away from identifying with liberal forces abroad, nor from assuming their ideological preference for democracy. In 1990, for example, India's External Affairs Minister I. K. Gujral referred to Nepal's successful democratization earlier that year as an example of how Indian leaders were "not merely the practitioners of realpolitik," but also concerned "with the grand visions or great ideas of remolding societies and restructuring inter-state relations."[727]

In 2003, while coming under American pressure for not supporting the invasion of Iraq and its global quest for "democracy promotion," India's Foreign Secretary K. Sibal took a jibe at Washington by implicitly referring to military-ruled Pakistan and, at the same time, reiterated his country's principled preference for democratic regimes: "leav[ing] aside what the Americans may or may not wish to see happen on the ground, it would be a good thing [for India] if there were liberal, reformist, democratic governments not only in the Arab world but everywhere else, including in our neighbourhood."[728] This principled preference was also articulated by his successor, Shyam Saran, who in 2005 would stress that, under any circumstances, in the region "our sympathy will always be with democratic and secular forces."[729]

More than forty years earlier, while declaring independence on August 15, 1947, PM J. Nehru had referred to India as "the star of freedom in the East," and the country's constitution itself, adopted in 1949, invested the state with various global responsibilities,

---

[727] Speaking in Kathmandu, Aug. 6: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 812.
[728] Oct. 21, 2003 on SAB TV: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 575.
[729] Feb. 14, speaking on "India and its neighbours," Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 335.

including to "promote international peace and security."[730] Indian leaders have thus developed a well-deserved fame for their moral foreign policy speeches, reflecting an idealist sense of exceptionalism and mission to transform world politics, in which the idea of inter-democratic peace always prevailed.

Less attention, however, has been devoted to understand the *causes* driving such principled stances: *why* do Indian leaders and officials come out in defense of liberal democracy abroad, whether in South Africa or in Sri Lanka? Addressing the Indian parliament, in early 1950, on the dangers of the Kingdom of Nepal remaining as one of the world's most isolated and autocratic countries, PM J. Nehru emphasized that beyond just moral righteousness, Indian support for democratization there was also anchored in a causal understanding of liberalization as being *practically* more beneficial and necessary, both for its neighbor and for itself:

> *We are interested of course in the development of freedom in all countries, more especially in Asian countries. We are interested in the abstract and we are interested in that as a practical and necessary step today in the context of Asia, because if it does not come it creates and encourages those very forces which ultimately may disrupt freedom itself.[731]*

This definition of interest in the development of freedom reflects the understanding that beyond principled motives, which Nehru calls the "abstract" interests, India's support for democracy is also based on a utilitarian view of such regimes as being more efficient and, therefore, inevitable in the long-term – the "practical" and "necessary" in Nehru's nomenclature. A closer look at these causal roots of India's principled preference reveals

---

[730] For his full speech, see: http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1947nehru1.html. Article 51 of the Indian constitution mandates that the "State shall endeavor to: (a) promote international peace and security; (b) maintain just and honorable relations between nations; (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another; and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration."

[731] Speaking on Nepal, March 17: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 84.

how its officials classify their own political system as an exceptional success, and therefore as a benchmark for its neighbors.

b) Model India as a benchmark for the "victorious march of democracy"

"Freedom," "pluralism," "liberal," "reformist," and "secular" – these concepts are used interchangeably in the sample statements above, which hinders a clear definition of what Indian leaders have in mind when they refer to "democracy." Common to all such descriptions of ideal government abroad, however, is the self-centered image of India's own political system, and the country's success in preserving its territorial integrity despite tremendous internal diversity and external challenges. The trajectory of India's liberal politics, addressing extraordinary demographic diversity through pluralist, secular, and federal institutions, is thus used as benchmark for how best to preserve independence, ensure domestic stability, pursue economic development, or engineer social reforms.

India's decentralized and parliamentary democracy is thus seen as the best – and often also the only feasible – state-building strategy to peacefully govern a large population marked by extraordinary diversity.[732] Beyond formal, institutional, legal or procedural criteria, Indian officials further tend to emphasize the substantive and liberal dimension of Indian democracy, in that it seeks to integrate minorities through the politics of inclusion and, conversely, reject the politics of majoritarian exclusion – whether based on

---

[732] See Kohli, *The success of India's democracy*.

ethnicity, language, class, caste, ideology, religion or any other differentiating denominator.[733]

Similarly, as Nehru underlined repeatedly in the 1950s, an infant democracy's capacity to survive a transition from colonialism or authoritarianism also relied on its ability to deliver on development by implementing long-term socio-economic reforms. Speaking in Colombo, in 1950, he emphasized:

> *If you have a democratic structure which does not bring that [economic] advance, then that democracy has failed just as much as any other political structure which fails to give political freedom to people would also have failed. (…) Achievement of political freedom is a great thing, but I have always thought of this freedom in the social and economic sense also.[734]*

Nehru's causal understanding of democracy as an advantage, in particular for India to achieve a "peaceful socio-economic revolution," is also apparent in his rising skepticism about the illiberal nature of the Chinese and Soviet models after their interventions in Tibet and Hungary, respectively.[735] As noted by Tanvi Madan, the Indian Prime Minister expected the long-term dividends of democratic rule to outweigh its short-term disadvantages.[736]

India's principled defense of democracy abroad is therefore anchored in its own experience, underlining the causal benefits of a liberal regime as the most effective political system to address the specific challenges faced by South Asia's developing, diverse and post-colonial countries. Strategist K. Subrahmanyam thus underlined that

---

[733] An Indian High Commissioner who served in Sri Lanka in the 1970s, reflects this thinking: "if ethnic and linguistic differences [were] irrelevant to the issues confronting a modern state, [then] the claim for absolute rule by the majority would be entirely valid," Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 156.

[734] Jan. 15: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 5.

[735] See his letter to the Chief-Ministers in Indian states, "The Basic Approach," July 13, 1958 in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 43, Second Series* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2011), 3-11.

[736] Madan, "Eye to the East," 190-4.

India "adopted secularism, democracy and parliamentary institutions because only it is through them that the unity and integrity of this multi -religious, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society can be sustained," and that, accordingly, India's foreign policy should be driven by the "pursuit of enlightened national interest," that promotes this model abroad.[737]

This is in no measure an exclusively liberal or Nehruvian view, but permeates the thought of leaders from all ideological and partisan backgrounds. For example, addressing the Sri Lankan parliament, in 1978, India's first Prime Minister from outside the Congress Party, M. Desai, reflected this utilitarian approach while speaking in Sri Lanka:

> *I can state with confidence that our [Indian] way ha[s] indeed proved its superiority in ensuring a better life for every citizen while still preserving his freedom and independence. Our pursuit of economic growth and social justice is continuous, sustained and yet subject to public opinion and pressures and cannot therefore be derailed by the cycles of extremism and violence that are inevitable when we follow the false prophets who tell us that an authoritarian system provides a better environment for rapid growth and modernization and will usher in the utopia of many foolish dreams.[738]*

Desai's practical understanding of the benefits of democracy as "our way" reflects the earlier thinking of J. Nehru who, in the late 1950s, had underlined that "wrong means will not lead to right results," and that that was "no longer merely an ethical doctrine but a practical proposition."[739] Similarly, the first Prime Minister from the BJP, A. B. Vajpayee, emphasized that democracy should be seen as an "effective instrument for fulfilling people's aspirations and resolving conflicts and contentious issues [because]

---

[737] Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 249-50.

[738] Feb. 6, 1978, in Colombo: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 127.

[739] Nehru, *SWJN SS v43*, 3-11.

history has proved time and again that free and democratic societies are the ones that are creative, self-corrective and self-regenerative."[740]

While not so prevalent, Indian leaders also associate an open political system with more growth and equitable distribution of wealth, leading in turn to greater political stability. This narrative link between democracy and sustainable development has been gaining ground in the last two decades, as Indian scholars and leaders have started to compare the impact of their democratic model to that of autocratic China. Speaking in Sri Lanka, in 2007, for example, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram noted that "absent democracy, whatever growth that may be achieved in short spells may turn out to be iniquitous growth and may exacerbate the social and economic disparities in the society."[741]

While this utilitarian approach to democracy always informed Indian thinking, there are indications that it has grown stronger with time as its political system survived and thrived. In 1955, India's Ambassador to the UN, V. K. Krishna Menon, had stressed the distinctiveness of his country's political system, noting that "[w]e have emerged [as] the largest democracy in the world."[742] But in line with the larger philosophy of non-alignment, Indian leaders at the time also recognized that democracy could assume a variety of shapes: the Indian one – parliamentary and liberal – was therefore one out of many possible and equally legitimate "democratic ways" to achieve the common objectives of social reform and economic progress. Speaking in Moscow, in 1955, Nehru

---

[740] Jan. 22, 2003, at International Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Parliament of India: http://archivepmo.nic.in/abv/speech-details.php?nodeid=9009.

[741] Nov. 11, L. Kadirgamar Memorial Lecture: Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1238. See also EAM Rao's speech on Aug. 5, 1990, in Nepal: "Democracy, human dignity and human rights are objectives which deserve to be pursued for their own sake. At the same time, they are the preconditions for peace, prosperity and development." Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 807.

[742] China's population was larger than India's at the time. Jun. 24, 1955, addressing the UN's 10th anniversary commemoration, San Francisco: MEA, "FAR 1955," 122.

noted that "whatever shape that [socialistic] pattern [of progress] or democracy might take, it must lead to open access to knowledge and equal opportunity to all."[743]

This early, cautious and relativist identification with liberal democracy gradually gave way to a more confident approach, as many of the "other ways" collapsed at the global and regional levels over the following decades, even as India's parliamentary and liberal model survived, successfully adapting to internal and external conditions. Over time, this incentivized more Indians to abandon the idea of democracy as a mere accident of history, and instead recognize a causal link between the specific nature of their pluralist institutions and the survival of their polity.

Different claims have been made about the causes of this success, depending on ideological proclivities and different readings of history. After the late 1970s, however, democracy became increasingly *Indian*, as leaders started to refer to the model as having native roots on the subcontinent that pre-dated the British colonial period. While particularly prevalent in nationalist circles, this bold claim of democracy as a distinct Indian civilizational trait reflected the rising popularity of the system. In 1978, PM M. Desai thus emphasized that "long before the democracies of Ancient Greece, democratic states existed in Ancient India."[744] In 1990, the External Affairs Minister N. Rao referred to "our ancient democratic traditions" and to the "democratic republics that existed in

---

[743] MEA, "FAR 1955," 133. See also Vice-President of India, S. Radhakrishnan, while welcoming Soong Ching-ling, the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, to New Delhi on Dec. 17, 1955: "In 1911 Sun Yatsen … formulated three principles – of nationalism, democracy and national solidarity, rights of the people and employment and opportunities for all. These ideals are accepted by us and we are trying to achieve them through parliamentary forms and processes." MEA, "FAR 1955," 238.

[744] Feb. 6, 1978 in an address to the Sri Lankan parliament: "One of our ancient scriptures, the Rig Veda, outlines how a ruler was to be elected (…) The realization that every man has the right to freedom has been deeply ingrained in our people (…) The Greek concept of democracy embraced only the elite," Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 126.

this part of the world when Buddha as born and preached."[745] And in 2003, PM A. B. Vajpayee noted that "democracy has deep roots in India's national ethos and our ancient culture, which teaches respect for divergent and even dissenting points of view."[746]

Whichever causes are privileged, the "idea of India" as a free and open society, anchored in a representative, parliamentary, federal and secular democracy, has been adopted as an uncontested article of faith by virtually every line of political thought, including by the Communist parties. The rising confidence with which Indian leaders and officials thus express their principled support for liberal democracy abroad is anchored in their experienced and exceptionalist recognition that India survived and thrived not in spite of, but because of this regime type.[747]

Particularly following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Indian leaders therefore started to boldly characterize liberal democracy as an inevitable system for all countries. In 1990, speaking in Kathmandu after Nepal had re-embraced multi-party democracy after more than 30 years, External Affairs Minister N. Rao thus observed that "one of the clearly discernible trends of the global changes has been the assertion by peoples of their fundamental democratic urges – their powerful desire to move on in the direction of multi-party systems of governance."[748]

This revived the dormant Nehruvian approach from the 1950s about humanity's inclination to "freedom" and the long-term inevitability of political liberalization, as

---

[745] Speech at Nepal's Council for World Affairs, Aug. 6, 1990: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 814.

[746] Jan. 22, 2003, at International Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Parliament of India: http://archivepmo.nic.in/abv/speech-details.php?nodeid=9009.

[747] In one of his last essays, strategist L. Subrahmanyam underlines this difference: "India, of roughly equal population to China, has proved that a developing country can grow rapidly without sacrificing either democracy or pluralism." http://www.indianexpress.com/story-print/907157/

[748] Aug. 6 1990: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 813.

reflected in Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee's speech on the occasion of the celebration of the Indian parliament's golden jubilee, in 2003:

> *Just as the international community has cherished India's successes along the path of democratic development since our Independence, we too have greatly valued the victorious march of democracy around the globe. The closing decades of the last century have seen totalitarian systems collapse. The dogmas that sustained dictatorships of various stripes, and advertised their superiority over democracy in development and human welfare, have crumbled. Coups, bloody power struggles and military take-overs have come to be seen as anathema to the ethos of our times.[749]*

India was now seen to have led the way in the "victorious march of democracy" worldwide. Reflecting such rising self-confidence and driven by a geopolitical rapprochement with the United States, India in the 2000s joined a variety of multilateral initiatives.

In February 1999, the U.S. government-funded National Endowment for Democracy organized an international conference on "Building a Worldwide Movement for Democracy," in New Delhi, leading to the foundation of the "World Movement for Democracy," which was attended by the Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee, External Affairs Minister J. Singh, Defense Minister G. Fernandes, and several other former Prime Ministers and ministers from different political parties.[750] In June 2000, India along with United States became one of eight co-founders of the Community of Democracies, later also joining its Democracy Caucus. Finally, in July 2005, a joint proposal from India and the United States led to the creation of the United Nations Democracy Fund, of which New Delhi became a top contributor in subsequent years.[751]

---

[749] Jan. 22, 2003: http://archivepmo.nic.in/abv/speech-details.php?nodeid=9009.

[750] For the full event report, see "Global Movement for Democracy Launched," in "News and Notes." *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 2 (1999): 184-187.

[751] For a detailed overview of these initiatives, see Kate H. Sullivan, "Democracy Promotion and the Problem of Peaceful Coexistence: Exploring the 'Democratic Diplomacy' of India," in *The Democratic Predicament: Cultural Diversity in Europe and India*, ed. Jyotirmaya Tripathy and Sudarsan Padmanabhan

Similarly, the Indian government also geared its foreign policy to promote greater international dialogue on specific issues such as multi-party parliamentary procedures, managing free electoral systems, or decentralization through competitive federalism.[752] No longer seeing their democratic system as a burden or anomaly, Indian leaders began to refer to it as a superior and inevitable form of government for all countries. Prime Minister M. Singh, for example, thus noted in 2005 that "liberal democracy is the natural order of political organization in today's world" and that "all alternate systems, authoritarian and majoritarian in varying degrees, are an aberration."[753] One year later, while addressing Parliament, he further emphasized that "all nations of the world … will one day function on these very principles of liberal and pluralistic democracy."[754]

On the foreign policy front, this reinvigorated the liberal link that Nehru had traced between democracy, international security and peace. India's strategic thinker K. Subrahmaniam had presciently noted, in 1981, that "the emergence of democratic India as a power in the international system would mean greater democratisation of that system and a shift of the global balance of forces in favour of liberal democratic values."[755] Such bold assumptions about the merits of a liberal order based on an inter-democratic peace,

---

(London: Routledge, 2014); C. Raja Mohan, "Balancing Interests and Values: India's Struggle with Democracy Promotion," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2007).

[752] Many of these existed since the 1950s, e.g. parliamentary exchanges. But in the 2000s, the MEA began to use these more systematically as a foreign policy and soft power instrument to reach out to emerging democracies, assisting their transition processes. E.g. in 2007, the Indian government hosted the 4th international conference on federalism, for the first time in Asia, and in 2011 its Electoral Commission instituted the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/current/IIIDEM_Project_Document.pdf.

[753] Feb. 25, 2005, while speaking at the annual *India Today* conclave, in New Delhi: http://archivepmo.nic.in/drmanmohansingh/content_print.php?nodeid=73&nodetype=2.

[754] May, 12, 2006: quoted in Baru, *Accidental PM*, 172. Similarly, EAM P. Mukherjee while speaking on PBS to Charlie Rose, on Oct. 2, 2007, referring to Myanmar: "I do believe no power can prevent the desire of the people. It may be delayed, but at some point of time, it will assert itself." Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 329.

[755] Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 261.

and India's interest in it, are now being increasingly articulated in Indian approaches to a variety of security issues, from freedom of navigation to the Internet as a public good.

c) Neighborhood exceptionalism: the city in a swamp

While India's domestic experience and utilitarian understanding of democracy shape its perceptions of political structures in neighboring countries, this is not always clearly stated in public, depending on the specific country and state of bilateral relations. For example, when an overall positive relationship is in place with an authoritarian regime because of superior reasons of state, Indian officials will take special care to express their general preference for democracy in coded language, for example as "moderate regimes."[756]

Conversely, when Indian security interests are assessed to depend on a neighboring state's political liberalization, favoring regime change there, leaders will bluntly refer to their own system as a superior model to be followed. For example, in 2007, as the Sri Lankan Army accelerated its military offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Finance Minister P. C. Chidambaram underlined such exceptionalism in a lecture delivered in Colombo:

> *In multi-cultural and plural societies, there is no model of governance better suited to reflect and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people than democracy … [it is important that the] political system recognizes the geographical or linguistic or ethnic divisions among the people and creates political institutions that will accommodate these differences … [but] the countries of South Asia, barring India, have still not resolved the fundamental question of the model of*

---

[756] "moderate" as in democratic. Jan. 11, 2006 lecture by FS S. Saran, in Shanghai: "it is our belief that India's national security interests are better served if our neighbours evolve as viable states with moderate and stable political and social environment and robust economies." Quoted in Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta, eds., *Indian foreign policy: challanges and opportunities* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007), 116.

governance that is suited to each of them; consequently, the [democratic] political institutions in these countries have not yet taken firm roots.[757]

Whether expressed this candidly or more diplomatically, such an understanding is deeply ingrained in the Indian approach to the neighborhood, including among the most conservative and security-oriented sections in its military or intelligence apparatus. A senior retired official of the external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, who worked for decades in the neighborhood, thus notes:

> *Unlike the pressure cooker effect in [the] USSR, [or] Yugoslavia, which eventually led to their fragmentation, India's approach has proved sustainable because [it is] less hegemonic and dominant, more open, democratic, pluralist, [which] is reflected in the 6th, 7th and 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India [providing various levels of autonomy for ethno-linguistic groups and tribal minorities]. Secularism and legal pluralist approach [are] a key issue in India's success, and both Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and other neighbors, have been unable to understand this.[758]*

As laid out in detail in the following chapter (6), given the myriad of cross-border ethnic and cultural linkages in South Asia, Indian officials understand their own country's security and domestic stability to be intrinsically tied to the willingness and capacity of neighboring states to replicate the Indian model: this means to achieve integration by embracing diversity and accommodating difference, instead of discriminating against it. Beyond just Indian security, political liberalization is therefore also broadly linked to regional security, as expressed in Foreign Secretary S. Saran's 2005 observation that "democracy would provide a more enduring and broad-based foundation for an edifice of peace and cooperation in our sub-continent."[759]

---

[757] Nov. 11: Bhasin, *IFR 2007*, 1238.

[758] P. Heblikar (Interview 047). For J. Prasad, who served as Indian ambassador to Kathmandu (2011-13), federalism in India facilitated a) social reform, b) decentralization, and c) ethnic integration. "But this is not always the case in neighboring countries, where majoritarianism and centralization prevail" (Interview 058).

[759] Feb. 14, speaking on "India and its neighbours," Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 335.

The reality since 1947, however, dictated that India has been mostly – and during long periods of time also exclusively – surrounded by illiberal neighboring regimes, whether military autocratic, royal absolutist, or ethno-nationalist majoritarian (Chapter 1 details this statistically). Scholar S. D. Muni underlines that as "each of India's neighbors drifted into strategies of building a more sectarian state" this lead to "strong divergence between India and each of its neighbours with regard to state-building strategies."[760]

As a democratic city in an illiberal swamp, New Delhi's policy-making circles faced a continuous security dilemma: engagement of such illiberal regimes could come at the price of cross-border unrest, while converse support for ethnic minorities or pro-democracy forces across the border risked affecting relations with the prevalent regime. Referring to this quandary, strategic analyst K. Subrahmanyam thus presciently observed, in 1986, that "either the Indian values of democracy, secularism, federalism and linguistic autonomy are going to make a headway in the neighbouring territories or, in the alternative, India is going to be [negatively] affected by the [illiberal] values in her neighbourhood."[761]

Part 1 of this Dissertation ascertained that India's posture during crises in the periphery is based on strategic assessments focusing on the strength and attitude of the neighboring regime (*dispensation*), the country's domestic stability (*order*) and its external alignment (*geopolitics*). However, as this chapter and the following one demonstrate, such assessments also focus on the neighboring country's regime type, as India favors liberal regimes in principle, depending on a cost-benefit analysis in the short- and long-term. While it may

---

[760] Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 24-25.

[761] K. Subrahmanyam, "India and its Neighbours: a conceptual framework of peaceful co-existence," in *India and its Neighbourhood*, ed. U. S. Bajpai (New Delhi: Lancer, 1986), 123.

be an exaggeration to note that "India's ideological coordinates as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, secular, democratic and plural state have *guided* its [foreign policy] behaviour" in the region, there are significant indications that these coordinates have at least *influenced* Indian behavior.[762]

Looking back at his career as Foreign Secretary, M. Dubey recalls that this causal preference is anchored in a vital concern about India's own security:

> *What happens to any of the pluralistic societies in its neighbourhood seriously affects India's ability to hold its own pluralistic society together. India should [therefore] make every possible effort to ensure that the pluralistic character of society is preserved in its neighbourhood. …[For example], secular forces in neighbouring countries should receive India's full support.[763]*

The liberal dimension in Indian strategic thought thus being apparent, the question arises to what extent it also affects Indian strategic *practice*. Under what conditions does India's principled and causal preference for liberal regimes influence its assessments and posture during crises in the neighborhood? The following chapter (6) examines the main source of such influence – governmental decision-making processes – by returning to our case studies. The remaining part of this chapter goes on to examine a secondary, indirect source of influence: the socio-political environment in which decision-making operates.

2. Liberal Environment: Open Society's Indirect Influences

Before re-examining whether and how the liberal dimension in India's strategic thought *directly* affects involvement in neighborhood crises (Chapter 6), we turn to the domestic environment in which decision-making operates. Does India's open society – with its

---

[762] Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 26.

[763] Muchkund Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy: Coping With The Changing World* (New Delhi: Pearson, 2013), 47, 52.

freedom of expression and democratic institutions – *indirectly* influence the government's assessments and posture? The state-society division adopted here is artificial but heuristically necessary to understand whether the liberal dimension in strategic thought is strictly endogenous to Indian bureaucratic and other elites, or if it has wider roots in civil society.[764] Three domestic processes appear conducive to influence India's foreign policy.

First, even when New Delhi abstains from taking a liberal posture, illiberal regimes in the neighborhood are bound to perceive the Indian state's democratic identity as a threat, affecting their own assessments and postures. A large number of democratic and minority leaders across the region have, right from the anti-colonial freedom struggle, been inspired by India and its democratic model, including the Nepali Congress in Nepal, the Federal Party and Tamil United Liberation Front in Sri Lanka, or Burmese leaders like U Nu and Aung San Suu Kyi.

Similarly, ethno-linguistic minorities in Nepal (Madhesis), in Sri Lanka (Tamils) and in Myanmar (Chin and Nagas) have often looked up to their co-ethnics on the Indian side of the border for inspiration. Over the decades, India has attracted an extraordinary diversity of political refugees and turned into the default safe haven for persecuted dissenters from across the region.[765] Ambassador Arvind Deo, who served in Nepal in the

---

[764] For an overview of the role of parliament, public opinion, and the media in foreign policy-making during 1970s, see chapters 6 and 7 in Tharoor, *Reasons of state: political development and India's foreign policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966-1977.*

[765] Besides Tamils from Sri Lanka, democrats and other minority activists from Burma and Nepal, such refugee populations hosted by India also include Tibetans, Afghans and Hindus from Bangladesh. In the 1980s, Pakistani activists of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy also found refuge in India. For India's refugee law, in particular affecting Chinese Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils, see Mike Anderson, "The Role of International Law in Defining the Protection of Refugees in India," *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 33, no. 1 (2015).

late 1990s, thus notes that the "intricate maze of [cross-border ethnic] relationships is at once a source of strength as, at times, a cause for complications in our bilateral context.[766]

Commenting on the consequent fear of "Indian contamination," strategic analyst K. Subrahmanyam observed that "when our neighbours use the terms hegemony and expansionism they are in reality expressing their fears about the ideas of representative Government, federal structure, linguistic autonomy and secularism spreading to their states."[767] In the 1980s, as India was exclusively surrounded by illiberal states, scholar Nancy Jetly exhorted New Delhi to recognize such concerns, however unfounded:

> *India's relative internal stability, underscored by its secular federal democratic polity, is an exception in the region … [and, therefore, India is seen as] a source of threat for the regimes in these countries which are facing problems of political legitimacy … Increasing demands for democratization from their own organized political parties leads the ruling elites to perceive India's democratic structure itself as being a destabilizing factor in their internal politics. This fear − real or perceived − would remain regardless [of Indian action]. … the degree of anti-Indian hysteria tends to vary in direct proportion to the degree of suppression of democratic urges within these countries[768]*

Despite adopting a restrained position of engagement, Indian governments are therefore often still targeted by illiberal regimes that rake up anti-India sentiments to consolidate their support base. Referring in 2005 implicitly to Nepal, which had just witnessed a coup, Foreign Secretary S. Saran qualified it as "unhelpful" when the "display of narrow nationalism based on hostility towards India … becomes a cover for [a neighboring government's] failure to deliver on promises made to their own peoples."[769]

---

[766] Arvind Deo, "South Asian Neighbours," *World Focus* 12, no. 143-144 (1991): 29.

[767] He goes on to predict that the "appeal of the Indian democratic model and the success of its experiment in pluralism … [will] hurt the parochial interest of the elites holding power in those [neighbouring] countries." Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 244-5, 48.

[768] Nancy Jetly, "India and the Domestic Turmoil in South Asia," in *Domestic Conflicts in South Asia: Political Dimensions*, ed. Urmila Phadnis (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1986), 67-8.

[769] Feb. 14: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 335.

Second, India's civil society plays an increasingly influential role in foreign policy decision-making, lobbying the government to support democratization or minority rights in neighboring countries.[770] While the political salience of India's "external relations" remains overall low, the booming private media sector since the 1990s has drawn new attention to India's foreign policy, most notably by increasing incentives for political parties to address high-visibility issues, whether it is the plight of Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, in 2009, or that of the protesting monks in Myanmar, in 2007.[771] Given the rising role of the media in influencing Indian foreign policy, N. Sarna, the longest-ever serving spokesperson of the MEA, in the 2000s, refers to it as a "behemoth [that] needs to be fed with information at regular intervals. It cannot go hungry. If one party does not feed it, the other will."[772]

Finally, the rising role of regional parties in India's new era of coalition politics has emerged as another channel of indirect influence on the Indian government to adopt more liberal postures. While such regional pressures are not entirely new, and were often reflected internally within the governing Congress party until the 1980s, their formalization gave them an unprecedented leverage – and even veto-power – on Indian foreign policy since the 1990s.[773] S. Baru, a former media advisor to the Indian Prime

---

[770] See chapter by Paul Staniland, Vipin Narang, and Rudra Chaudhuri on parliament, states, elections, coalitions, of Rajiv Kumar on the private sector, of Manoj Joshi on the media, and of Devesh Kapur, Amithabh Mattoo and Rory Medcalf on universities, think tanks, and public opinion in David Malone et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 205-311.

[771] On "the low electoral salience of foreign policy and the high encapsulation of the central foreign affairs and defense bureaucracies" see Narang and Staniland, "Institutions and Worldviews in Indian Foreign Security Policy." On the MEA's new public diplomacy efforts: Ian Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (2012).

[772] Navtej Sarna, "Media and diplomacy," in *Indian foreign policy: challanges and opportunities*, ed. Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007), 1147.

[773] On the 1950s, for example, Nehru's tradition to brief regional chief-ministers through fortnightly letters on foreign policy matters should be seen more as a voluntary and pedagogic effort, rather than attempt to pre-empt their pressures: Madhav Khosla, ed. *Letters for a nation: from Jawaharlal Nehru to his chief ministers,*

Minister, thus observes that "with the decline of large pan-Indian national political parties and the emergence of fractured coalitions, [the] difference between political parties on … foreign policy, is bound to grow."[774]

How have these domestic forces and processes influenced India's strategic practice towards its neighboring countries? Unlike with strategic thought in decision-making (examined in the following chapter), their effect is *indirect* and, therefore, more difficult to measure. A cursory examination of our case studies reveals, however, reveals a considerable influence.

a) Nepal: civil society and political activism across an open border

India's policy towards Nepal has been profoundly shaped by deep and historic connections between both countries' civil societies. Nepal's main party − the Nepali Congress (NC) − was founded in 1947, in India, where most of its leaders were inspired by the Indian National Congress and participated in its freedom struggle against British colonialism. Since the early 1940s, NC leaders such as B. P. Koirala maintained close links to progressive Indian leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia. In 1947, contravening the Indian government's decision not to support the NC's rebellion against the Rana autocracy, Indian activist such as Biju Patnaik assisted rebels

1947-1963 (New Delhi: Penguin, 2014). See also Appadorai, *The domestic roots of India's foreign policy, 1947-1972*; Nalini K. Jha, *Domestic Imperatives in India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: South Asian, 2002).

[774] Sanjaya Baru, "The Influence of Business and Media on Indian Foreign Policy," *India Review* 8, no. 3 (2009): 282. For a critical view on how "India's federal structure and the contemporary reality of coalition governments ensures that decisions are not outcomes of a rational calculation by the Indian government, but political resultants of the interplay of stakeholders' interests": Pai, *The Paradox of Proximity: India's Approach to Fragility in the Neighbourhood*, 13.

with weapons sent by Burmese Prime Minister Aung San.[775] By offering their Nepalese counterparts support and pressuring their own government, Indian political parties and activists played an influential role in Nepal's liberalization of the 1950s.

After the royal coup of 1960, there are significant indications that Indian domestic support for Nepalese democrats strained Nehru's attempts to engage King Mahendra. Referring in parliament to the former PM B. P. Koirala, who had begun a hunger strike under detention, Nehru underlined that Indians were "distressed for the larger reason that wherever such a thing occurs we would be distressed, and for some personal reasons also, personal in the sense that Shri Koirala was a comrade of ours in our own Indian struggle for independence."[776]

As the Nepali Congress went into exile across Northern India to pursue an armed struggle against the monarchical regime, New Delhi soon proved unable to curtail its activities, which delayed bilateral normalization with Kathmandu. The Indian Prime Minister faced continued pressure, including from his own party, to support the NC rebels with weapons, ammunition and logistics in their quest to return the kingdom to democratic rule. [777] J. P. Narayan thus wrote two "strong letters" expressing his "displeasure" at Nehru's lack of support for NC rebels and dismissed Nehru's pragmatism: "to support a democratic movement which is struggling for the end of dynastic rule in foreign nation is just and natural."[778]

---

[775] Bimal Prasad, "Jayaprakash Narayan and Nepal," in *Nepal in transition: a way forward*, ed. D. P. Tripathi (New Delhi: Vij 2011), 134.

[776] MEA, "FAR 1961," 124.

[777] See parliamentary debates and specific demands in Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 423-28.

[778] Quoted in Prasad, "Jayaprakash," 135-6.

When the Nepalese government accused India of instigating and arming the rebels, Nehru retorted with a professed incapacity to reign them in, given India's democratic system: "It is a little difficult for other countries, which have not got the rule of law, to understand this [Nepalese rebels operating under Indian law], just like the Chinese who seem to imagine that we can issue orders to all our newspapers to do this or that – which is ridiculous – because they can do so".[779]

Beyond incapacity, however, internal assessments indicate that the Indian government may also have been partially unwilling to take stronger measure against the Nepalese rebels, possibly in order to deflect domestic pressures and to also use them as leverage in negotiations with the Nepalese regime.[780] It is difficult to ascertain the intensity of the NC rebels as spoiler effect in bilateral relations, but they were significant enough for King Mahendra to remain concerned even after they called off their armed struggle, in 1962.[781]

While aligned with New Delhi's posture favoring a liberal regime change during the crises of 1990 and 2005-06, Indian domestic activism played a facilitating role. As the pro-democracy *Jana Andolan* movement took on to the streets of Kathmandu, in early 1990, several members of the Indian parliament, including from the ruling coalition, rushed to Nepal to join the protests in a competitive expression of solidarity. In January 1990, for example, the Nepali Congress held a major pro-democracy convention, in open defiance of King Birendra, which was attended by prominent Indian political leaders, including

---

[779] See also deputy EAM L. Menon before parliament, on March 16, 1962: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 427-8.

[780] See also the internal brief by Joint Secrretary K. L. Mehta, on Feb. 12, 1962, to all heads of mission: "as long as the Nepalese activities in India remain peaceful and within the purview of our laws, we could not proceed against them," NAI, MEA HI/1012(27)/63 pp. 254-56.

[781] In Nov. 1964, King Mahendra complains to the Indian ambassador, during their first meeting. The ambassador then proceeds to meet the Governors and Chief-Ministers of the border states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal to seek their support in curtailing the NC rebel activities: Narayan, *India and Nepal*, 6-7.

Chandra Shekhar (Janata Dal) and Subramanian Swamy (Janata Party), both from the ruling coalition, as well as H. Singh Surjit (CPI-M), M. Farooqi (CPI), and M. J. Akbar (INC), from the opposition.[782] In the most ironic twist, the retired Indian General S. K. Sinha had also planned to attend but cancelled and then changed his supportive stance after being invited by PM V. P. Singh to become India's ambassador to Nepal.[783]

Despite governmental efforts to normalize the bilateral relationship, and to convince its coalition parliamentarians not to get involved, such informal links emboldened the Nepalese democratic movement and reduced the Indian government's legitimacy to support King Birendra. PM V. P. Singh and EAM I. K. Gujral thus managed to convince Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate not to visit Kathmandu, but failed to do so with Chandra Shekhar, who saw this as an opportunity to demarcate his position from the government's engagement policy.[784]

Finally, during the 2005-06 crisis, Indian parliamentarians and political leaders, especially from the Communist parties, who were then part of PM M. Singh's coalition government, played an important role in Nepal's regime change by facilitating an understanding between the democratic parties and the Maoist insurgents. [785]

---

[782] Parajulee, *Democratic Transition*, 205-6. D. P. Tripathi recalls he visited Nepal as R. Gandhi's "special envoy," with a letter of support for G. Man Singh and K. P. Bhattarai: Tripathi, *Nepal in transition*, 183. There are also indications that parliamentarians from North India pressured the government to support political liberalization in Nepal, expecting this to benefit bilateral economic relations and commercial interests in their constituencies close to the border Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.3*, 2008 and following.

[783] Sinha, *Soldier Recalls*, 341-2.

[784] Muni, *India and Nepal*, 166-7. On Nepalese perception of this Indian support, see PM K. P. Bhattarai's speech, in June 1990, while being conferred an honorary doctorate by Delhi University: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 793.

[785] S. D. Muni recalls the particular influence of D. P. Tripathi (NCP), Sita Ram Yechury (CPI-M), and Digvijay Singh (INC): S. D. Muni, "Nepal's democratic evolution: roles of inclusive consensus and India," in *Nepal in transition: a way forward*, ed. D. P. Tripathi (New Delhi: Vij 2011), 68. For the role played by the CPI-M in shaping the Indian government's position as part of its UPA coalition, e.g. by calling for suspension of military assistance to Nepal, on March 18, 2005, by expressing support for the Seven Party Alliance, in June, and by demanding a a constituent assembly, in September: Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 503.

Parliamentarian D. P. Tripathi (NCP), for example, created the "Nepal Democracy Solidarity Committee" with representatives from all major parties except the BJP, and recalls attending an opposition conference in Kathmandu, in July 2005, where he declared support on behalf of the Indian government because his party supported the ruling coalition. As a friend of Maoist leader B. Bhattarai since their student days at Jawaharlal Nehru University, in New Delhi, Tripathi and others enabled meetings between Nepalese and Indian Communist parties, on the one hand, and also with the Nepalese Maoists, on the other hand.[786]

However, while the large majority of Indian political parties and activists consistently supported Nepal's democratization during each of these crises, there have also been contrary influences from conservatives supporting the preservation of a Hindu monarchy in the neighboring country. After the 1960 coup, for example, King Mahendra received the visits of M. Digvijaya Nath (All-India Hindu Mahasabha) and M. S. Golwalkar (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), who expressed their support for the "world's only Hindu kingdom."[787] Similarly, during the 2005 crisis, the BJP refused to condemn King Gyanendra's coup, with Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok Singhal visiting Kathmandu to express support for the isolated "Hindu monarchy."[788] This suggests that while mostly liberal, India's civil society can occasionally also exert significant illiberal pressures to support autocratic or ethno-nationalist regimes abroad.

---

[786] Tripathi, *Nepal in transition*, 184-5.

[787] See the concerned Indian Embassy report from Kathmandu, Feb. 1963: NAI, MEA HI/1012(27)/63 pp. 12-13. On similar support from opposition parliamentarian Deendayal Uphadyaya (Bharatiya Jana Sang), in Jan. 1965: http://deendayalupadhyay.org/agents.html.

[788] He arrived in Kathmandy on Feb. 28, just as the Indian government placed pressure on King Gyanendra: http://www.thehindu.com/2005/02/27/stories/2005022704341000.htm, see also Jha, *Battles*, 108-11.

b) Sri Lanka: ethnic solidarity and electoral competition

Regional influences on India's decision-making process are particularly visible in the case of Sri Lanka, where right from the 1950s New Delhi's posture was shaped by electoral competition in its bordering state of Tamil Nadu. In the late 1950s, for example, PM J. Nehru was repeatedly forced to address criticism from Tamil parliamentarians about the fate of the stateless Tamils in Ceylon, both from within his party as well as from opposition and regional parties.[789]

Despite being firmly in power in the state of Madras (renamed Tamil Nadu in 1969), first under Chief Minister K. Kamaraj (1954-63), and then under M. Bakthavatsalam (1963-67), the Indian National Congress (INC) faced the rising opposition from the regionalist opposition party DMK. In the early 1960s, its leader C. N. Annadurai began referring to Ceylon to criticize the Indian government and distinguish his party as the prime defender of Tamil culture. This was often done in opposition to the governing INC, which he accused of neglecting South India, and the Tamils, in particular. In one such instance, in 1964, the EAM S. S. Singh did not mince words in denouncing Annadurai's electoral motives: "the distinguished leader of a group like the D.M.K. … may have his eyes on the General Elections and he may be thinking of using this [Tamils in Ceylon] as a big lever for his election campaigns in Madras State but as a member of the Government, I have to take a more realistic view."[790]

---

[789] See e.g. parliament debate, Dec. 9, 1958: MEA, "FAR 1958," 319.
[790] Dec. 23, in parliament: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1964," (New Delhi 1965), 312-3.

The 1980s illustrate how the domestic environment constrained the Indian government to take on a more liberal posture in its foreign policy towards Sri Lanka. Beyond determinant strategic assessments (analyzed in Chapters 3 and 6), there are strong indications that PM I. Gandhi's decision to pressure Sri Lanka after the 1983 ethnic riots was influenced by domestic compulsions, given that both general and state elections were scheduled for late 1984 in Tamil Nadu.

The two rival regional parties in the state had, from the late 1970s onwards, competitively championed the cause of their Tamil co-ethnics in Sri Lanka. For example, after ethnic riots in August 1977, the Tamil Nadu Assembly had passed a unanimous resolution expressing its "rude shock" and asking the Indian government to send a representative and start an inquiry in Sri Lanka.[791] Such competition spiraled quickly out of control: in the early 1980s, CM M. G. Ramachandran confessed both his inability and unwillingness to close down training camps for Sri Lankan Tamil insurgents located in his state, because he feared that his opposition rival M. Karunanidhi could exploit such move as a "betrayal" of the Tamil cause.[792]

When the "Black July" riots engulfed Sri Lanka, in 1983, it therefore became paramount for New Delhi to express solidarity and support in order to pre-empt any accusations of neglect and to achieve electoral success. On July 27, 1983, as it convened for the first time after the riots, the Indian parliament was thus immediately taken over by a shrill debate,

---

[791] Moved by K. Manoharan, of the governing ADMK party: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1078.
[792] Gunaratna, *Indian intervention*, 2-3.

with representatives from all parties asking the government to take punitive actions against Colombo, including a possible military intervention.[793]

Parliamentarian Subramanian Swamy demanded that the Indian Army prepare an expeditionary force to rescue the Sri Lankan Tamils, while others exhorted the Indian government to take the issue up at the United Nations, to call back the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, to expel the Sri Lankan High Commissioner from India, or to approve a condemnatory resolution. The cross-partisan consensus was indicated by support even from Leftist parliamentarians, with Chitta Basu denouncing Colombo's "pro-Western" policies, amidst repeated references to a "massacre", "genocide" and "holocaust" of Tamils in Sri Lanka.[794]

The Sri Lankan High Commissioner in New Delhi at the time, B. Tilakaratna, recalls that the Indian government's reaction was shaped by electoral considerations, as PM Indira Gandhi's "greater concern was appeasing Tamil Nadu."[795] The riots' specific timing did, indeed, serve PM I. Gandhi's immediate political interests, but as India got involved in Sri Lanka as a mediator over the following year, domestic demands soon also veered towards criticism, accusing her of not doing enough in defense of the Tamil minority.[796]

In 1984, the Sri Lankan President Jayewardene thus recalls the Indian Prime Minister suggesting that "it might be a good idea to stretch the [Sri Lankan] negotiations until

---

[793] For the parliament debates from July 27 until late August 1983, see Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1468-557.

[794] Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1470, 81, 83.

[795] Bernard Tilakaratna, "The Sri Lanka Government and peace efforts up to the Indo-Sri Lanka accord: Lessons and experiences," in *Negotiating peace in Sri Lanka: efforts, failures, and lessons*, ed. Rupesinghe Kumar (Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006), 50.

[796] See e.g. the parliament debate on May 7, 1984. V. Gopalsamy to EAM N. Rao: "your humanitarian flag was flying sky high in 1971. What happened to this humanitarian flag? Why it is a half-mast now?" Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1589.

after the Indian elections," until later that year or early 1985, to avoid controversial decisions that may affect the campaign in Tamil Nadu.[797] Even while no longer alive to witness it, Indira Gandhi's electoral calculus eventually paid off, as the Indian National Congress government won an unprecedented majority in the national elections of December 1984, and also emerged victorious to form a regional coalition government in Tamil Nadu.[798]

However, in the long term, her son and successor Rajiv Gandhi would become profoundly constrained by these domestic forces. Emboldened by PM I. Gandhi's assertive stance after 1983, Tamil Nadu's regional government and political parties became more actively involved in shaping India's Sri Lanka policy, whether by hosting various Tamil insurgent groups, facilitating negotiations between them, or pressuring New Delhi to escalate its involvement.[799] Despite its parliamentary majority, after 1985 the Indian government thus came under increasing attack from Tamil and other representatives. Parliamentarian S. S. Veghela (BJP) denounced that "it is not the Rama of Ramayana [Jayewardene] who set Sri Lanka on fire, but the wrong policies of [inactivity of] this Government," while Tamil parliamentarian J. Jayalalitha (AIADMK) emphasized that "we act not like doves of peace but like lame ducks" and "should give a proper military chastisement to Sri Lanka and teach them a lesson once and for all."[800]

---

[797] De Silva and Wriggins, *Jayewardene v.2*, 759.

[798] State elections held on Dec. 4, 1984: M. G. Ramachandran re-elected with victory of the AIADMK and INC alliance, which secures an absolute majority of 195 out of 234 total seats in the regional assembly.

[799] Apr. 1984: Opposition DMK leader M. Karunanidhi invites representatives of the five main Tamil organizations to Chennai to form a common front, after which the EPRLF, EROS and TELO announce the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF): http://www.sangam.org/articles/view2/?uid=819. On Apr. 23, 1985, and all-party Tamil Nadu delegation led by its Chief Minister, M. G. Ramachandran, meets PM R. Gandhi to pressures him to support Tamil insurgents.

[800] March 14, 1985: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 200-3. On Feb. 27, 1986, J. Singh (BJP), called the Indian government "responsible for the deteriorating situation in SL" because it "contributed towards the

Beyond immediate electoral compulsions, India's foreign policy towards Sri Lanka gradually turned into a domestic issue, on which the government could not even afford the mere *appearance* of backtracking. When, in May 1987, the Tamil Nadu government publically announced a large funding package for two Tamil insurgent organizations, the Indian government thus kept mum.[801]

The salience of this regional dimension is further highlighted by the Tamil Nadu government's crucial role in facilitating Indian outreach efforts and negotiations with the insurgent organizations, without which the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka agreement could not have been reached.[802] Just three days after it was signed, PM R. Gandhi thus travelled to Tamil Nadu, reassuringly observing that its provisions "went well beyond the initial demands of the Sri Lankan Tamils … [giving them] regional autonomy comparable to state governments in India."[803]

The regional parties' increasing leverage, and even veto-power in the era of coalition governments, further constrained the Indian government in 2009, as Sri Lanka launched a military offensive and finally defeated the Tamil insurgency. There are significant indications that India's posture of engagement towards Colombo, supporting its military

---

imposition of a ceasefire during which firing never actually ceases," Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 1714. In May, 1987, parliamentarians reiterated demands for military action: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1886-9.

[801] On May 26, 1987, Tamil Nadu's Chief-Minister M. G. Ramachandran extended a financial grant of Rs. 4 crore to Sri Lankan insurgent organizations LTTE and EROS. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 91-2. His minister P. Ramachandran recalls that a special fund was set up to administer this grant, which was publically announced in order to mobilize political support for the regional government (Interview 031). Another estimate notes that M. G. Ramachandran may have disbursed a total Rs. 20 crore to various insurgent organizations between 1983 and 1987: Gunaratna, *Indian intervention*, 418.

[802] This influence is recalled by P. Ramachandran, at the time a minister in the regional government led by M. G. Ramachandran, serving as the contact person for several Prime Ministers and other central authorities seeking to bring Tamil Nadu on board. He prepared and also partially attended the crucial meetings between PM R. Gandhi and LTTE leader T. V. Prabhakaran, in July 1987, as well as some of the Cabinet Security Committee meetings on Sri Lanka (Interview 031).

[803] Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 1979.

offensive and the defeat of the LTTE, was constrained by the regional party DMK's vital support to the ruling UPA coalition after 2004. The DMK also held power in Tamil Nadu after 2006, under Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, who was continuously briefed on India's Sri Lanka policy by the Indian National Security Adviser and Foreign Secretary, who shuttled between New Delhi, Chennai and Colombo.[804]

Competitive politics between the DMK and the AIADMK, at the regional level, and the DMK's effective veto-power on the governing coalition in New Delhi, exerted considerable pressures during the final phase of the war, in 2008-2009.[805] Foreign Secretary S. S. Menon thus recognizes that while India did not formally request the Sri Lankan government to delay its final offensive until after elections were held in Tamil Nadu, on May 13, 2009, "that expectation was naturally understood and followed by Sri Lanka."[806] One day after the election results were announced in India, returning the Indian National Congress to power, the Sri Lankan Army launched its final military offensive, which killed the LTTE leader T. V. Prabhakaran, on May 19.

c) Burma/Myanmar: civil society's deep reach into the state

The extent to which domestic forces affected India's foreign policy posture is also reflected in New Delhi's conflicted attempts to normalize relations with Myanmar in the early 1990s. Despite the Prime Minister's clear instructions, in 1991, to engage the

---

[804] See e.g. Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 895-6.

[805] For specific instances, see Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1874; Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 160-2. *Indian Express* editor S. Gupta also alludes to these pressures, alleging that T. V. Prabhakaran was killed with Indian assistance only after elections were held: http://www.indianexpress.com/story-print/1192670/

[806] Interview 078.

neighboring military junta, the Indian state virtually split on the issue, as many cabinet members and state officials continued to support Burmese pro-democracy forces.

Right after the pro-democracy protests of 1988, Indian civil society organized to support political liberalization in Burma, with the participation of several political leaders, both from the ruling coalition and the opposition. The ruling party's All India Congress Committee adopted resolution in support of Burmese democratic movement and later that year, former diplomat and future President K. R. Narayanan became the first chairperson of the India-Burma Friendship Society. The attendees of its June 20, 1990 meeting, just after the Burmese military had overruled its parliamentary election result, reflects the organization's wide and cross-partisan support base: P. N. Haksar (former adviser to PM I. Gandhi, from the INC), George Fernandes, Jaswant Singh and Yashwant Sinha (all parliamentarians and future ministers of defence and external affairs of the BJP), Chandra Shekhar (parliamentarian of the ruling coalition and future Prime Minister), and also several leaders of the Communist parties.[807]

Besides ideological motivations, such support was often widely rooted in personal experiences, as many participating leaders had been born in colonial Burma but forced to leave after the *Burmanization* policies of the 1950s, or expelled after the military regime took over in 1962. Several crucial personalities in the Indian lobby thus had personal links to Burma, and sometimes evoked these when publically supporting democracy in Burma: President R. Venkataraman's wife had been born and raised in Burma; Communist leader Prakash Karat (CPI-ML) had been born in Burma and left in 1957; and Vice-

---

[807]IDEA, *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 109. http://www.outlookindia.com/article/the-doublespeak-spin/210508, http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/1995/bnn052395.txt

President K. R. Narayanan (1992-1997, then President until 2002) was married to a former Burmese citizen.[808] These "Burmese Indian" returnees and their associational networks thus served to mobilize support and played, at the least, an irritant role in the bilateral relationship.[809] Several examples demonstrate how deep this social network reached into India's state institutions, and how it managed to sabotage the government's efforts to improve relations with Myanmar's military junta.

First, in 1992, President R. Venkataraman ignored diplomatic protocol to publically chastise Myanmar's generals while reluctantly accepting the credentials of their new ambassador to India.[810] The declarations were seen in Yangon as a "very bad move", hampering the envoy's mission to normalize and "heal the relationship".[811] Myanmar's ambassador, U Wynn Lwin, recalls he felt like "a sitting duck in a [political] tsunami," with regular demonstrations held in front of his embassy and his almost complete isolation from Indian authorities.

Second, influential voices of the ruling party, the Indian National Congress, kept attending public meetings in support of democracy in Burma throughout the 1990s, which was not well received in Yangon. For example, in 1992, the future minister of External Affairs, K. N. Singh, attended meeting of India-Burma Friendship Society, and

---

[808] Compiled from various open sources and interviews.

[809] For their associational life, see Renaud Egreteau, "Burmese Indians in contemporary Burma: heritage, influence, and perceptions since 1988," *Asian Ethnicity* 12, no. 1 (2011).

[810] Feb. 3, 1992: http://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/1992/02/07/indian-president-urges-myanmar-government-to-restore-democracy&post_id=40701, see also http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199805/msg00229.html

[811] Myanmar's ambassador in New Delhi, U Wynn Lwin (Interview 60).

spoke in favor of recalling the Indian ambassador and cutting diplomatic relations with Myanmar.[812]

Third, civil society pressures also succeeded in delaying prosecution against two Burmese pro-democracy activists who had highjacked a Thai aircraft to India.[813] Burmese exiled pro-democracy activists were supported by Indian government members and politicians, and, in 1992, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma was allowed to open a representation in New Delhi despite being outlawed in Myanmar.[814]

Finally, in 1995, the lobby pulled its greatest coup, forcing the Indian government to deliver its Jawaharlal Nehru Prize for International Understanding to pro-democracy icon A. S. Suu Kyi (of the NLD), then under house arrest in Yangon.[815] The Award commission was headed by Vice-President K. R. Narayanan, who went on to attend the public conferral ceremony, in November.[816] Officially, the announcement underlined Suu Kyi's "brave, non-violent and unyielding struggle for freedom, democracy and human dignity.[817] Interviews with various government officials reflect that the May announcement caught the Indian Prime Minister by surprise. At the same time, Myanmar's junta was also taken aback, as expressed in a blunt media interview by its

---

[812] Nov. 6: Soe Myint, *Burma File: a Question of Democracy* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2003), 514-5.

[813] For details, see http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/1995/bnn052395.txt. For the Indian government's official statement: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1990," (New Delhi 1991), 235-6.

[814] By 1993 there were an estimated 14,000 Burmese "political exiles" in India: Rita Manchanda, "Diplomacy: Reasons of state," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 156, no. 18 (1993). On Indian governmental support, see Myint, *Burma file*, 250-90; Haksar, *Rogue agent*, 150-8.

[815] The Award (for 1993) was announced on May 8. The Award is managed by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, part of the Ministry of External Affairs.

[816] Nov. 14, in New Delhi. His speech refers to Suu Kyi as an "authentic heroine of freedom and democracy": http://krnarayanan.in/html/speeches/others/democracy_14nov1995.htm

[817] MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1995," (New Delhi 1996), 116.

ambassador to India, U Wynn Lwin.[818] The deliberate timing of the announcement also lead Myanmar to pull out of a joint counter-insurgency operation across the border, to Indian military officials' great discontent [819]

Recalling the impact of such domestic pressures, R. Bhatia, then in charge of the Myanmar desk at the Ministry of External Affairs, recalls that the government was forced to adopt a conflicted "two-track track" policy, seeking to "extend moral and political support to the democratic forces and leaders, and … also engage [the] military government in order to improve and upgrade government-to-government relations." Bhatia recalls co-authoring a policy paper with G. Parthasarathy, J. N. Dixit, and P. M. S. Malik, which was cleared by the Prime Minister: "a calibrated and complex initiative to balance principles, values, interests and geopolitical realities."[820] However, despite such balancing attempts to accommodate domestic criticism, he recalls that this dual policy was subjected to continued "pressures and counter-pressures" from an internal "liberal lobby and supporters of democracy," on the one hand, and "realists [that pressed] for giving up the pro-democracy track," on the other hand.[821]

India's domestic lobby for democracy in Burma would continue to hamper the government's effort to normalize relations throughout the 1990s. In early 1993, Foreign Secretary J. N. Dixit (1992-96), the greatest advocate of normalization, made the first

---

[818] K. N. Singh, who was part of the Award selection committee at the time, recalls that K. R. Narayanan made the announcement without consulting the Prime Minister, which lead to tensions between both, as PM N. Rao was "visibly upset [because] he was caught by surprise" (Interview 075). For Myanmar Ambassador U Wynn Lwin's reaction: http://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/more-importance-has-been-attached-to-the-prize-to-suu-kyii-than-bilateral-rela/200484

[819] Egreteau, *Wooing the generals: India's new Burma policy*, 152-3; Shailendra K. Agnihotri and B. Datta-Ray, eds., *Perspective of security and development in North East India* (New Delhi: Concept, 2002), 289.

[820] Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 101-2.

[821] Bhatia, *India-Myanmar*, 102. While at the MEA's Policy Planning Division (1992-95), Deb Mukharji recalls writing a note suggesting quick normalization with Myanmar's Junta, which, however, was received with little enthusiasm (Interview 056).

official outreach visit to Yangon. Reflecting concern about internal pressures, the Ministry of External Affairs made efforts to keep the visit as confidential as possible.[822]

The pro-democracy lobby's deep reach into state institutions was also personified by G. Fernandes, who despite becoming Defence Minister in 1998, continued to support Burma's pro-democracy movement and harbor its exiled activists at his official residence, in New Delhi. Even as part of the ruling government coalition, in 1998, his party thus vowed "to support the democracy movement in Burma in all forms and aspects ... there will never be any change in that in so far [to] our commitment to support Aung San Suu Kyi and the battle for restoration of democracy there".[823]

Conclusion

This chapter provided an introductory overview of the liberal dimension in Indian strategic thought and practice. The first section of the chapter illustrated how, beyond just moral righteousness, Indian leaders express their principled support for democratic forces abroad because they causally associate liberal and pluralist regimes with greater stability, order and security.

Reflecting their country's successful trajectory in preserving territorial integrity and achieving economic development despite an extraordinarily diverse population, Indian leaders perceive their own system as a model for other demographically diverse countries,

---

[822] Manchanda, "Diplomacy: Reasons of state." See also Satya Sivaraman, recalling his coverage of FS J. N. Dixit's 1993 visit to Myanmar, for the IANS: http://www2.irrawaddy.com/print_article.php?art_id=3294.

[823] Sept. 27, for his Samata Party. Also in 1998: 75 members of the Indian parliament joined the NLD's "Campaign August'98," demanding the 1990 parliament to be reinstated. Signatories were from the CPI-M, Janata Dal, BJP and Samata Party, with the latter two being part of the governing coalition: Myint, *Burma file*, 270, 51-2.

especially in South Asia. Mirroring India's exceptionally successful experience with its pluralist political system, this strand in strategic thought has grown stronger with time, and in the 2000s Indian Prime Ministers thus portrayed liberal democracy as being both necessary and inevitable.

But how does this liberal strand in Indian strategic thought and speech affect strategic *practice*? Are India's strategic assessments and postures, examined in Part I of this dissertation, somehow influenced by a preference for liberal regimes? This *direct* influence is addressed in the following chapter (6).

Chapter 5, in turn, proceeded to address the *indirect* influence of India's domestic environment on decision-making, by examining to what extent the country's political parties and civil society activism influenced Indian governmental postures towards Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. A cursory re-examination of the most significant case studies leads to the following four conclusions:

1. *Pressures are mostly liberal*: Reflecting the democratic, diverse, open and pluralist nature of Indian society, and its political system, domestic forces generally influence the Indian government to take on a liberal posture, favoring neighboring country's democratization or greater liberal accommodation and inclusion of its minorities. In rare circumstances, these pressures can, however, also be illiberal, as exemplified by the Hindu nationalist support for monarchy in Nepal.

2. *Liberal pressures influence*: While liberal pressures are never determinant, they play an auxiliary role by either accentuating or moderating the government's posture. These influences can, for example, delay a bilateral normalization process with an authoritarian

regime (Nepal after 1960, and Myanmar after 1988) or, conversely, accelerate a coercive posture favoring a liberal regime change (Sri Lanka in the 1980s).

3. *Multiple pressure channels*: India's democratic system and environment are conducive to a variety channels through which civil society influences the government's foreign policy posture towards neighboring countries. Besides formal channels, in particular regional parties during coalition governments (Sri Lanka 1980s), activist lobbies and pressure groups are particularly adept at informally exploring India's deep state-society embeddedness (Nepal 1990 and 2006, Myanmar in the 1990s).

4. *Instrumentalization of pressures*: Finally, while the domestic influence of India's democratic system and its pressure groups on policy-making is significant, it is often also exaggerated, as the Indian government will, at times, deliberately invoke and strengthen such forces to gain leverage in negotiations or disputes with neighboring regimes.

*

Having established the existence of a liberal dimension in Indian strategic thought, and described the extent to which India's democratic system and open society can *indirectly* influence the government's foreign policy postures, the following Chapter (6) focuses on the key question of how regime type *directly* influences Indian assessments and posture.

CHAPTER 6 – TOWARDS LIBERAL SECURITY: REGIMES IN THE SHORT-
AND LONG-TERM

> *[In] multilingual, multiethnic, multi-religious [countries] it should be the primary concern of the decision making elite … not to alienate the minority. … Discrimination backed up by force will only result in, first militancy and terrorism, and then separatism [with a negative cross-border impact on India] … that minority is [then] bound to seek assistance from foreign sources, who are inimical to your country … [So it is] an open invitation to external interference, if we do not structure our own society on principles of fair play and justice to the minority.[824]*

J. N. Dixit, as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka (1989)

If, at least in principle, Indian officials identify with democratic regimes in the neighborhood; if they recognize their positive impact on Indian domestic stability and security; and if they sanction them as a necessary and inevitable system for all diverse countries in the region; then why does India not *always* adopt foreign policy postures favoring regime liberalization?

Part I, for example, shows that India has, at times, engaged illiberal regimes to support their continuity, especially in the 1950s, and also in Myanmar, in 2007. If one focuses only on India's *posture*, and takes on a simplistic, zero-sum approach that sees "interests" and "values" as incompatible, we'll be tautologically forced to conclude that India's strategic culture of crisis response is always based on an objective pursuit of Indian "interests," and therefore immune to "idealist" considerations about regime type.

---

[824] New Delhi, March 10, 1989, at the United Services Institution: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 2346-53.

Defending liberal democracy abroad would, in this perspective, come as an expense to Indian security and be tantamount to an altruistic "sacrifice" or idealist "luxury".[825]

If, however, one focuses on India's *assessments* instead, and considers the possibility that its implied objectives are also defined *in relation to* the regime type in each neighboring state, the possibility of a liberal dimension in India's strategic culture arises. As suggested in the previous chapter (5), this assumes that India's "interests" and "values" are not necessarily incompatible but, instead, mutually constituted: this is reflected, for example, in the understanding that India's domestic security is maximized by a pluralist regime in a neighboring country, which recognizes and includes its ethnic or religious minorities, instead of alienating them and thus creating conditions for conflict, disorder and instability with negative cross-border repercussions on India.

Following on the discussion of the sources of liberal thought in Chapter 5, this chapter re-visits the case studies of Part I of the dissertation to evaluate how regime type influences Indian strategic assessments and posture. While referring specifically to the case of Sri Lanka in the 1980s, J. N. Dixit's introductory quote to this chapter suggests such a causal link between an illiberal regime's incapacity to develop an inclusive political dispensation to integrate an ethno-linguistic minority, and the consequent conditions for conflict with negative repercussions for Indian security. This causal link – and the associated cost-benefit calculation on whether to push for liberalization – may have been relatively clear

---

[825] For the limits of such a binary approach, see e.g. former Indian ambassador I. P. Khosla definition of "three variants of the balance between the ethical [preference for democracy] and the expedient [security interests]" in India's relations with its neighbours: 1) "ineluctable tension": clash between preference and interests, which affects relations; 2) "no tension": preference and interests match; 3) "uncertain stalemate" or "adaptive" transition period: when "the language of the moral is [still] present, but a decision has already been taken that we can no longer cultivate this luxury," I. P. Khosla, "India and Myanmar," in *Indian foreign policy: challanges and opportunities*, ed. Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007), 611-12.

and consensual at the time on Sri Lanka, and may also appear particularly sensible in hindsight, but it is rarely as simple because of conflicting short- and long-term horizons.

In their strategic assessments about crisis response and posture in the region, and in particular about the liberal nature and trajectory of their neighboring regimes, Indian decision-makers are thus often confronted with a dilemmatic trade-off between present expediencies and future possibilities. For example, how does regime type affect a neighboring country's attitude towards India, its capability to foster domestic order and stability, and its geostrategic alignment, both in the immediate context and in the distant future? Are liberal regimes always in India's interest, or only under certain conditions, for example in the short- or long-term? Similarly, beyond expediency, are there are other factors incentivizing India to engage illiberal regimes, especially in the short-term? How soon will an expected regime change take place, whether it is the collapse of an exhausted authoritarian system, or the gradual debilitation of a liberal polity? These are some of the policy-making questions affecting Indian assessments and posture.

The following three sections re-evaluate our case studies to understand if, when, and how India's three typical assessments (*dispensation*, *order*, and *geopolitics*) are influenced by the neighboring country's regime type. This unearths an additional time dimension, reflecting Indian decision-makers' faculty to run complex cost-benefit analyses on the short- and long-term benefits of more or less involvement, and of engagement or coercion.

1. Nepal from Monarchy to Maoism: small steps towards liberal democracy

India's assessments on Nepal reflect a persistent dilemma between immediate geopolitical priorities and long-term concerns about the adverse effects of illiberal rule, especially by monarchical absolutism and conservative elites.

a) 1960: The perils of democratic transition force "a step backward"

In Chapter 2, we saw how India's posture of engagement after King Mahendra's 1960 coup was driven by a pragmatic and short-term assessment to ensure Nepal's cooperation in case of a conflict with China. Immediate geopolitical priorities thus dictated involvement with an authoritarian regime led by an absolutist King that declared democracy unsuitable for Nepal, banned political parties and detained its leaders, many which had been India's allies.[826]

One day after the coup, on December 16, 1960, PM J. Nehru thus stood before the Indian Parliament expressing that it was "a matter of regret to all of us that a democratic experiment or practice that was going on [in Nepal] suffered a setback."[827] His choice of words, however, betrayed his view that, while the King would prevail in the short-term,

---

[826] Speaking on Apr. 20, 1963, in New Delhi, the King argued that "parliamentary democracy" is not suitable to many Asian countries, at least in the short-term, which therefore explained Nepal's failed democratic experiment in the 1950s, and therefore a necessary "period of transitional state guidance" under his leadership: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 433-39.

[827] Dec. 16: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 409. Commenting on King Mahendra's early 1963 visit to Delhi, Foreign Secretary M. J. Desai confides to Ambassador Narayan in Kathmandu that "there is no question of his restoring parliamentary democracy in Nepal" (Apr. 23, 1963): NAI, MEA HI/1012(27)/63 p. 20.

the democratization of Nepal was a long-term inevitability and that therefore, sooner or later, "the step backward will have to be retraced."[828]

Nepalese democrats were naturally upset in the following years at Nehru's realism and short-termism. Seven years after the coup, the ousted Prime Minister B. P. Koirala, remained under detention. In his prison diary, he complained:

> *India is too weak and demoralized to play any effective role in international politics. A weak state, like a demoralized individual, is prone to misunderstand its own interest and act adversely to it. … India is bankrupt and it would be a fatal mistake to depend upon her to be of any use to Nepali democrats.[829]*

In his bitterness, however, Koirala ignored that, had it not been for India, he would never have become Nepal's first democratically elected Prime Minister. Throughout the 1950s, as surveyed in Chapter 2, India had taken the lead to change and change one of the most isolated countries in the world, playing a crucial role to democratize it. This was not because of naïve ideology or idealism, but due to a strategic link the Indian establishment traced between democracy, stability and security – at least in the long term.

Exactly ten years before the coup, in December 1950, Nehru had first articulated this Indian view about Nepal's political liberalization being in the long-term interest of Indian security. Commenting on the decision to interfere in Kathmandu to assist a pro-democracy rebellion against the Rana's feudal rule, Nehru recalled his earlier warnings about the inevitability of democracy to ensure domestic stability and external security:

> *Three years ago [in 1947], we assured Nepal of our desire that she should be strong, independent and progressive country. In the nature of things, we stood not only for progressive democracy in our*

---

[828] Jan. 18, 1961: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 414. S. D. Muni notes that Nehru's reaction was "indeed an emotional outburst, howsoever undiplomatic and unguarded [but] it was also an articulation of Nehru's concern for the prospects of political instability in the strategically placed Himalayan Kingdom at a time when tensions were deepening in Sino-Indian relations," Muni, *India and Nepal*, 43.

[829] Aug. 6, 1967, quoted in Tripathi, *Nepal in transition*, 20, 54.

own country but also [in Nepal] … We pointed out in as friendly a way as possible, that the world was changing rapidly and if Nepal did not make an effort to keep pace with it, circumstances were bound to force her to do so.[830]

In 1949, he had emphasized that democratization was inevitable to avoid destabilization and "overwhelming" effects, pointed to developments in China, and warned against the changes in Tibet: "[the] Government of Nepal is allowing valuable time to slip by (…) problems will not be of military character so much as an invasion of ideas and dangerous ideas at that. This invasion can only be met by internal changes brought about in time."[831] Such concerns had been articulated directly, for example by warning Nepalese Prime Minister M. S. J. B. Rana repeatedly about the need to reform, arguing that beyond a mere "negative approach" of combating Communism, countries also needed a "positive programme" of political liberalization to ensure long-term stability.[832]

In 1950, such circumstances had finally arrived. As the aristocratic regime refused to heed India's "friendly" advice, Nehru decided in 1950 to invest in facilitating regime change because, following the annexation of Tibet, it had become imperative to inoculate the Kingdom against the possibility of destabilizing influences from Chinese Communism.

In Nehru's view, "progressive democracy" in Nepal thus reflected the best guarantee to protect India's own security, leading New Delhi to hastily press for political change throughout the 1950s.[833] While committing tremendous resources to democratize Nepal,

---

[830] Speaking to parliament, Dec. 16, 1950: quoted in Muni, *India's foreign policy: the democracy dimension (with special reference to its neighbours)*, 25. Two years earlier, in 1948, when asked about India's policy priorities in Nepal, Nehru listed "to promote political and economic reform and progress in Nepal" as the second of four objectives: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 62.

[831] Sept. 10, 1949, in a letter to Amb. C. P. N. Singh: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 79.

[832] Letter of June 9, 1949: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 70.

[833] For India's role in the 1950-51 regime change, see Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 103-75.

and thus secure India, Nehru was, however, mindful that transition was fraught with short-term risks and costs. He thus presciently warned King Tribhuvan, in 1951:

> *Democratic changes, after a long period of autocratic and authoritarian rule, release many suppressed forces which tend to be indisciplined in the early stages, and a sense of responsibility, which is essential for ordered freedom, takes time to grow. Thus there is always a danger that the new freedom might lead to growth of indiscipline and even endangering the freedom gained.[834]*

Similarly, writing two years later to Prime Minister M. P. Koirala, he cautioned that democracy "did not exist in the air" and "envisaged certain conditions," without which "the new-found liberty could and would lead to license and disintegration."[835]

Indeed, over the next decade, Nepal went through revolutionary changes, with a new constitution finally adopted in 1958, which reactivated conservative resistance.[836] In their reformist impetus, Nepalese democrats often looked up in awe to China as a model, even while Nehru reminded them that each political system had its own costs and benefits.[837] Eventually, as Nehru had feared, the benefits of freedom took an increasing toll on Indian interests: competitive nationalism fed on "anti-India" stances and rapprochement with China, Nepalese parties factionalized, political instability became chronic, and the regime's growing incapacity risked disorder and instability.

---

[834] Oct. 3, 1951: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 187.

[835] Aug. 15, 1953: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 308.

[836] L. Rose and B. Joshi elaborate on the causes of this failure after 1951: "[regime change] occurred in Nepal under the diplomatic midwifery of the Indian government [and was a] total change … a brand-new innovation whose basic system linkages were with the emerging political structure in independent, democratic India." The 1951 Interim Government of Nepal Act was therefore a "hastily prepared adaptation of the Indian Constitution" and failed as conservative forces reacted with the King's support: Bhuwan L. Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic innovations in Nepal: a case study of political acculturation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1966), 487-8, 510-13.

[837] For example, after Nepal's PM B. P. Koirala returns from Beijing, in 1960, enthusiastic about Chinese mega-dams, Nehru emphasized "that is only possible in a dictatorship, where 20 lakh labourers can be put to work. It is not possible in a democracy," quoted by Koirala, *Atmabrittanta*, 224.

When the first elected Nepalese government took charge, in 1959, the Indian Prime Minister noted that "we welcome this [democratic] change, because we felt that it was the right thing for Nepal to develop on democratic lines and thereby come nearer to us in our general outlook."[838] However, while Nepal's democracy was seen as inevitable and also favorable to India in the long-term, it was also apparent that its infant fragility risked turning into a security liability for India, prompting Nehru to recognize and privilege the short-term benefits of a return to authoritarian order.

b) 1990: the promises of liberalization and a "bond of shared democratic values"

Nehru would probably not have guessed that it would take Nepal three long decades of twists and turns to revive multiparty democracy. As examined in Chapter 3, when the bilateral crisis first flared up, in 1987, New Delhi was not pursuing, and in many ways also opposed to regime change.[839] But as tensions escalated, Indian strategic assessments gradually converged to see King Birendra's authoritarian rule as the cause for the conflict, as an obstacle to its resolution, and thus hindering Indo-Nepalese normalization.

As S. D. Muni, one of India's top Nepal experts described, while for almost three decades Indian officials agreed that the "democratic system in Nepal may not be necessarily an ideal alternative for India to work for" the crisis in the late 1980s made it apparent that it was "in India's enlightened long-term interests to see that liberal, democratic forces in

---

[838] 1960, during PM B. P. Koirala's visit to New Delhi: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 405. The joint communiqué noted that Nehru expressed "India's sympathetic interest in … the social and economic regeneration of Nepal by democratic means," MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1960," 14.

[839] But the Indian government had been sympathetic to liberalization attempts since the 1970s, and had welcomed the constitutional referendum of 1980, in which voters preferred the prevailing representative system (54%) over a return to multiparty democracy (46%): For the official reaction see Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 701-8. See also Urmila Phadnis, "Nepal: The Politics of Referendum," *Pacific Affairs* 54, no. 3 (1981).

Nepal are strengthened and this is done without causing any major political and social disruption."[840]

India's deputy Minister of External Affairs at the time, K. N. Singh recalls that New Delhi had always seen Nepalese kings surrounded by "inspired intriguers, dedicated sycophants and conscientious frauds [who] ill-advised their unsuspecting masters who, alas, always missed the pulse of time" and that, in 1989, a line was crossed, as PM R. Gandhi had had enough of the "imaginary grievances of the [royal] Nepali establishment."[841] By 1989, Indian decision-makers thus started to shift their focus, increasingly valuing the long-term advantages of regime liberalization.

The strategic nature of this policy assessment was further confirmed by the fact that it survived a change in government, in late 1989. Despite its electoral campaign promises to change Indian policy, de-escalate and normalize relations, the new Government of PM V. P. Singh swiftly embraced and even intensified the coercive posture of its predecessor within a few weeks of coming to power, publically noting that Nepal would have to inevitably adjust to "a fresh wind blowing across the planet, bringing new hopes of liberalization, freedom and democracy".[842]

As the Spring of 1990 witnessed the rise of mass pro-democracy protests, clogging and bloodying the streets of Kathmandu, New Delhi saw political liberalization as being both inevitable, and also necessary to defuse the risks of radicalization, violence and disorder. The newly-arrived Indian ambassador, retired general S. K. Sinha, thus recalled his main

---

[840] Muni, *India and Nepal*, 105.

[841] Singh, *Walking*, 121.

[842] Speech by EAM I. K. Gujral, on Jan. 3, 1990, welcoming Nepalese FM S. K. Upadhyaya: "Old barriers are tumbling down, and the sprit of liberty, of equality, of human dignity, is spreading far and wide. It is our earnest hope that this new ethos will contribute to greater understanding, trust and cooperation … also in our region," Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 780.

mission as to "impress on King the need to soon come to terms with the forces of democracy" because the protestors' demands "may escalate to a republic" and because "an Army cannot fight its own people forever."[843]

India's domestic security, in particular, was seen to depend on the capacity of a democratic regime to persuade Communists to abstain from an armed struggle and, instead, embrace parliamentary democracy. Several Communist Parties of Nepal, especially the CPN-ML, had engaged in anti-India rhetoric and actions, even advocating armed resistance and stronger links with Indian Maoist insurgents, until the early 1980s. While disarming thereafter, they maintained their radical stances, favoring a revolutionary path towards a republic, which was often based on hostility against India.[844]

In early 1990, the External Affairs Minister I. K. Gujral thus expressed New Delhi's crucial support for a regime change:

> *The Government's attitude to the current mass movement in Nepal, with the stated aim of reestablishing a multiparty democractic system under a constitutional monarchy is determined by the fact that as a major democracy, we cannot but feel committed to the cause of democracy, of equality and human dignity. Today, when momentous changes are taking place all over the world and global politics are democratized, we cannot be averse to such aspirations.[845]*

Less than two weeks later, Gujral welcomed King Birendra's indications that he would transfer power to the people as "a victory for peace, prosperity, development, democracy and happy relations with India."[846] Indian leaders and officials repeatedly underlined the

---

[843] Sinha, *Soldier Recalls*, 358.

[844] In 1990, the two main factions (CPN-ML and CPN-M) joined six other parties to create the United Left Front and supported the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), which was welcome by India. On the Communist angle in Indian assessments, see Lok Raj Baral, "The return of party politics in Nepal," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (1994): 130-31; Krishna Hachhethu, "Nepal's India Policy under Communist government in Nepal," *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999).

[845] March 30, in parliament: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 784-5.

[846] EAM I. K. Gujral in parliament, on Apr. 9, 1990: "…The winds of liberalization, freedom and democracy have been blowing across our planet. India is a democracy and our people are committed to

new "bond of shared democratic values" as a positive development that would facilitate and strengthen bilateral relations, thus suggesting India's causal preference for a liberal regime in Kathmandu.[847]

While hosting the new Nepalese Prime Minister in June, 1990, in New Delhi, India's Prime Minister V. P. Singh thus proclaimed that "today, Nepal and India come together once again".[848] One year later, External Affairs Minister M. S. Solanki reiterated that "our bonds have been further strengthened when, in 1990, the people of Nepal secured for themselves a new political order based on their own political will and aspirations […] Given India's abiding commitment to the values of democracy, these developments brought us closer to each other."[849]

The 1987-90 crisis therefore decisively tipped the Indian decision-makers' assessment scale in favor of regime change, exposing the limits of monarchical authoritarianism. At the same time, it reflected Indian expectations that regime liberalization would foster domestic order, economic growth, and geostrategic alignment with India. With an eye on the failed transition of the 1950s, however, Indian officials also cautioned that the long-term sustainability of Nepal's infant democracy relied on more than just formal elections.

Quoting from a 16th century North Indian epic while on a visit to Kathmandu, in August 1990, External Affairs Minister N. Rao noted that "a King whose subjects are in pain, deserves hell," thus presciently cautioning King Birendra not to overstep his

democratic values. We are full of hope and faith in the aspiration of our Nepalese brethren for a liberal and truly democratic polity," Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 787.

[847] EAM N. Rao in Kathmandu, Aug. 6, 1990, who also calls the 1987-90 crisis an "aberration in India-Nepal relations," Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 813.

[848] Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 797. See also MEA, "Annual Report 1990-91," (New Delhi 1991), iii.

[849] Dec. 4, 1991: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1991," (New Delhi 1992), 236. In its annual report, the Ministry of External Affairs also refers to a "qualitatively new era of relations" between both countries: MEA, "Annual Report 1991-92," (New Delhi 1992), ii.

constitutional role, even while he also defined the democratic leaders' "momentous task" as the "consolidation of the democratic process" in order to overcome the "challenges of the future" such as "the conquest of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment."[850] Failure to deliver on either of the two fronts would embolden illiberal forces, whether conservatives calling for a return to autocratic royal rule, or revolutionaries promising an ideal republic through violence.

<u>c) 2006: Completing an unfinished task and pressing on</u>

If he were still alive then, the 2005-06 crisis in Nepal would have confirmed Rao's worst expectations: fifteen years later, Kathmandu was torn between a resurgent King who had taken over power through a coup, and Maoist revolutionaries who had plunged the country into a deadly civil war affecting India's domestic security.

Chapter 4 examined the strategic assessments that led India to adopt a coercive posture against King Gyanendra, who had sidelined the political parties, suspended democracy, pressed on a military offensive against the insurgents, and adopted a hostile attitude towards India while cozying up to China. Such assessments were influenced by the broader Indian view that the 1990 transition had faltered but not failed, and that only further regime liberalization would deliver a strong and cooperative political dispensation, conflict resolution and order, as well as geopolitical realignment.[851] Even more than in

---

[850] In Kathmandu, on Aug. 6 1990, from Goswami Tulsidas' 16th century *Ramcharitmanas* Awadhi epic: "*Jasu raaj priya praja dhukihani, So nrip avsi narak adhikari.*" Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 806, 14.

[851] For example, Deb Mukharji, India's ambassador to Nepal in 2000-01, notes that in 1990 King Birendra had "given in but not completely," notably by inserting constitutional clauses that bestowed the monarch with significant powers, which he and his successor (Gyanendra) made use of tactically to reassert their role. (Interview 056).

1990, Indians clearly identified pluralism as the only sustainable state-building strategy for Nepal, as either monarchical or Maoist rule presaged further conflict and instability.

Reflecting this long-term view that the civil war was only a symptom of a larger malaise, India's External Affairs Minister Y. Sinha observed as early as 2003, that his country's concern was "not merely about the Maoist problem, which is an immediate problem" but that India was instead "interested in the stability of Nepal … in a democratic Nepal."[852] Officials reiterated this causal understanding of liberal democracy as the best system to promote stability in Nepal incessantly over the next years, underscoring that conflict resolution and economic development required more, not less political freedom as advocated by King Gyanendra. Speaking at the height of the 2006 crisis, Foreign Secretary S. Saran thus reiterated that "it has always been our wish to seek peace and prosperity in Nepal because stability in Nepal is in the best interests of India [and] democracy in Nepal is the best guarantee of such stability."[853]

As examined in Chapter 4, New Delhi saw the Maoist insurgency as a manifestation of broader popular discontent with the centralized, elitist and conservative nature the Nepalese state. By sidelining the democratic parties and pursuing a military offensive the King was thus further legitimizing the rebels' cause, expanding their popular support, and perpetuating the war. Accordingly, Foreign Secretary S. Saran observed in 2004 that "any pursuit of a peace settlement must be within the parameters of the preservation of multiparty democracy" and that India "would welcome" a settlement "in which the

---

[852] In a media interview, Dec. 12, 2003: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 437.
[853] Apr. 26: Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 743.

Maoists are ready to come in as a legitimate political entity, abandon violence, [and] take part in a free and fair elections."[854]

King Gyanendra's coup on February 1st, 2005, however, decisively shifted India's assessments towards liberal regime change as a precondition to conflict resolution and return to order in Nepal. The first official statement, on the same day, was crystal clear:

> *[Emergency] constitutes a serious setback (…) India has consistently supported multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy enshrined in Nepal's Constitution as the two pillars of political stability in Nepal … [India] will continue to support the restoration of political stability and economic prosperity in Nepal, a process which requires reliance on the forces of democracy.* [855]

With an eye on Nepal's past democratic reversal (1960) and limited success (1990), in 2005-06 a rising number of Indian officials saw the institution of monarchy as irreversibly linked to authoritarianism, conservatism and anti-Indianism, and therefore incapable to deliver in the long-term. The Indian Joint Secretary in charge of Nepal at the time, Ranjit Rae, thus recalls that King Gyanendra wrongly assessed that "he could get away doing the same as King Mahendra in 1960" by following the old "Mahendra mythology of the King as the only savior capable of protecting Nepal against Indian expansionism", and on the "myth of monarchy as the only guarantee of Nepal's stability and unity."[856]

In India's view, the new dispensability of monarchy was thus buttressed by memory, as well as by the identification of a historic window of opportunity to permanently lock in

---

[854] Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 612. The Indian government had set out similar conditions as "red lines" to the CPN-M while the 12-Point Understanding was reached in New Delhi, on November 22, 2005. FS S. Saran recalls these as a written commitment of intent to "join multiparty democracy, abandon exceptional status, lay down weapons, and integrate in regular Army through phased and negotiated political settlement, normalize as a non-violent political party" (Interview 028).

[855] Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 487-8.

[856] Interview 026. Similarly, FS S. Saran recalls that King Gyanendra "had been warned [but] overstepped our red line. Right until the very end [of January 2005] we told him 'don't' do this [coup], because it will be the end of monarchy'. But he did. That is when we moved into an active posture of contacting with Maoists" (Interview 028).

Nepal's floundering liberal experiment since 1947 on two crucial fronts. On the one hand, the Maoist insurgents had secretly signaled their commitment to lay down their weapons and join electoral politics. Its leader Prachanda had, as early as 2002, written to the Indian Prime Minister, to the UN Secretary General and other international leaders to emphasize his party's [CPN-M] commitment to "universal democratic values and principles".[857] On the other hand, based on an extraordinary multi-party platform, the Seven Party Alliance created in 2005, the expanding youth base of the democratic parties transformed the Spring 2006 anti-King protests into an unprecedented mass movement cutting across age, class, ideology and caste.[858]

It is important, however, to underline that India's long-term view, seeking Nepal's liberalization by mainstreaming the Maoists, was in no way consensual, both internationally and internally. The U.S. Ambassador J. Moriarty, for example, reproached the Indian government for "analyzing the situation through slightly rose-colored glasses."[859] Similar skepticism was also widely prevalent in Indian governmental organizations dealing with domestic security, especially the Intelligence Bureau. NSA M. K. Narayanan explains: "[at the time] I thought [that] we had our natural constituency in

---

[857] Muni, "Bringing the Maoists," 320-1. The Maoist's transformation and assurances are analyzed in Chapter 4.

[858] On the young and encompassing character of the Jana Andolaan II protests, in the Spring of 2006, as a pro-liberal and national movement see Jha, *Battles*, 62-5. For India's endorsement of the creation and demands of the 7-Party Alliance, in May 2005, see Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 526.

[859] Dec. 13, 2005 after meeting Indian Foreign Secretary S. Saran, in Kathmandu: they "appear to be trying to convince themselves that the Maoists have genuinely changed," in https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05KATHMANDU2793_a.html. Also, in early February, 2006: "supporting Maoists is not the way to achieve our [US-India] mutual goal of restoring democracy to Nepal" https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KATHMANDU450_a.html.

[the] Nepali Congress, the democratic parties; these should be the ones we should sort of help out, strengthen. From my perspective, [the] Maoists were the least acceptable."[860]

This only corroborates the perspective that, more than a mere leap of faith or moral impulse, New Delhi's assessment of 2005-06 was guided by a farsighted understanding that Indian interests required a stable and peaceful neighbor, and that this, in turn, depended on further liberalization of its democratic regime to co-opt the insurgents and end civil war.[861] Claiming the transition's success as being in India's long-term national interest, in 2008 External Affairs Minister P. Mukherjee emphasized with a sense of vindication that "with our suggestions, with our advice to the political parties, it has been possible to bring a hardcore militant, believer in violence, organisation in the mainstream of the democratic politics of Nepal."[862]

Accordingly, the transition of 2006 was welcome as a positive development for bilateral relations, based on the understanding that the progress of democracy in Nepal would further deepen the links with India: "[the] restoration of democracy in Nepal provided a historic opportunity for a qualitative enhancement of bilateral relations between the two countries, which rest on … shared faith in democracy, freedom and the rule of law; and pursuit of peace, stability and prosperity."[863]

Beyond such optimism, however, Indian officials also echoed Nehru's pragmatic view from the 1950s, that despite being on an inevitable trajectory towards pluralism, Nepal's

---

[860] Interview 077.

[861] See, for example, the Sept. 9, 2006, speech by FS S. Saran at the Indian Council for World Affairs, in New Delhi: "in retrospect, by aligning ourselves with democratic forces in Nepal, by supporting the transformation in progress, we have done rather well." Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 675.

[862] Speaking on March 19, 2008, just before Nepal's elections for a Constituent Assembly: Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 1252.

[863] June 9, 2006, joint statement after Nepalese PM G. P. Koirala's visit to India: Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 764.

road to democracy remained long, with several obstacles still ahead. This liberal, long-term view thus also persisted to influence New Delhi's subsequent posture, after 2006, to support a federal system as a measure to increase domestic stability by decentralizing the state and enhance its representativeness, especially among ethno-linguistic and religious minorities, whether in the Himalayan highlands or in the Terai lowlands.

More than half a century earlier, Nehru had warned against a Nepali Congress monopoly in the government and insisted in decentralization through an all-party, diverse, and more representative cabinet to reflect the country's ethnic and geographic diversity: "There is far too much of a tendency to think in terms of Kathmandu and rather to ignore the hill people and, more especially, the Terai. This is very unwise and is bound to trouble in the future."[864]

Once again, the "Indian model" became a comparative benchmark, as expressed in the 2008 speech of S. Saran, then serving as the Indian Prime Minister's special envoy:

> *…a plural democracy like India has learnt to celebrate its diversity and counts this as one of the pillars of its democracy. It is my hope that Nepal will do so, too, because only a more inclusive, a more accommodative approach is required for a stable and enduring democracy.[865]*

While not analyzed here in detail, New Delhi's coercive posture during subsequent crises in Indo-Nepalese relations, especially in 2007-08 and in 2015-16, further indicates a growing salience of this long-term liberal view in its strategic assessments. Two Indian ambassadors who recently served in, and are intimately familiar with Nepal, reflect this approach. For Ambassador J. Prasad (2011-13):

[864] Letter to the MEA's Secretary General, Oct. 28, 1951: Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, 193.
[865] Apr. 26, 2008, at a seminar organized by the MEA in Patna, India: Bhasin, *IFR 2008*, 1260.

Nepal [was always a] traditionally a unitary state, so federalism [is] a new issue and anathema to centralization. Opposition to federalism reflects interests and profile of Kathmandu's traditional elite: upper-caste, hill, isolated, conservative and non-representative. [They oppose federalism because it] would shift power away from this traditional center.[866]

Similarly, his successor, Ambassador R. Rae (in Kathmandu since 2013), emphasizes:

[the] nationalist slogan of 'ek bhasha, ek bhesh, ek dharma, ek desh' [one language, one dress, one religion, one country] started in the 1950s, but remains ingrained in [Nepal's] state structure. Federal and decentralized constitution [is] important because it addresses issue of diversity through inclusive representation. [This is a] larger social reform process, which India went through, but [ist] still incomplete in Nepal. [It is] in India's interest not because it weakens Nepal, but because it strengthens it through stability.[867]

2. Sri Lanka: the liberal formula to stability and security in diversity

Indian strategic assessments during crises in democratic Ceylon/Sri Lanka have been persistently influenced by a concern about the regime's illiberal ethno-nationalism and its long-term consequences on the country's stability. As a consequence, India's domestic and regional security is perceived to depend on Sri Lanka's capacity to develop a pluralist and inclusive system to accommodate its Tamil minority and mitigate conflict.[868]

a) 1956: Early alarm set off by a liberal eye on the future

Chapter 2 demonstrated how India's short-term strategic assessments prevailed in 1956, leading to a posture of engagement towards the new regime, which politicized the island's latent ethnic divide and, in 1958, precipitated the country's first mass riots since

---

[866] Interview 058.

[867] Interview 026.

[868] For a similar argument, see Chapter 7 and the concept of India's "relational control" in its neighborhood policy, in Chadda, *Ethnicity, Security*.

independence. New Delhi's cooperative attitude was driven by the new government's socio-economic progressive leadership, its geopolitically reorientation from the West towards Indian non-alignment, and the need to preserve political influence on the island. However, even while Indian policymakers pragmatically engaged Colombo, their assessments disclose a clear recognition of the regime's illiberal tilt, cautioning Ceylonese leaders about the risks of its long-term, negative ramifications in terms of a spiraling radicalization, conflict, and effects on India.

While welcoming the 1956 election of Solomon Bandaranaike as the new Prime Minister, the acting Indian High Commissioner M. M. Nair thus observed that "the seeds of discord were also sowed" and that the new government's language policy "completely alienated the Tamil community" and "bitterly split a population that had hitherto lived at peace."[869] V. Coelho, who would serve as a High Commissioner in the 1970s, thus recalled that "for the unity of the country this [Sinhalization] may well have been a retrograde step, namely the development of a political ethos comprising of religious, linguistic and economic discontent."[870]

Similarly, B. N. Chakravarty, the Indian High Commissioner who had served in Colombo until 1956, presciently warned about the consequences of these policies:

> *…a religious and cultural revivalism among the Sinhalese, of a reactionary type leading to the language controversy and an increasing conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamils. (…) The [Plantation and stateless] 'Indians' having been disposed of, the attack has now begun on the Ceylon Tamils by denying parity between the Sinhalese and Tamil languages. (…) [Muslims and Christians should also be concerned] but these minorities do not realize that their turn would come next [as] Communalism and Buddhist fanaticism are both gaining ground.[871]*

---

[869] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 p. 1.

[870] Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 80.

[871] NAI, MEA 3(8)-R&I/57 pp. 1-3.

By "Indians," Chakravarty was referring to the "Plantation Tamils", a community of around one million laborers in the island's highland tea plantations, which had migrated there since the 19th century, while by "Ceylon Tamils" he referred to the autochthonous religious (Hindu) and linguistic minority of around 10-20%, mostly concentrated on the Northern and Eastern coastal areas.[872]

The island's future conflict would involve the Ceylon (or Sri Lankan) Tamils, starting in 1956, but India's causal concern about the long-term impact of the island's illiberal regime can be traced back to the late 1940s, when Colombo first started to pass discriminatory laws against the Plantation Tamils, refusing to grant them citizenship and thus rendering them stateless. On Ceylon's new Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act, Nehru this expressed his "great disappointment:" "The Government of India cannot regard as satisfactory any attempted resolution of the problem which would … enable the Ceylon Government to discriminate against citizens of Indian origin."[873]

After a first bilateral agreement failed in 1954, India and Ceylon would get entangled in protracted negotiations over the next decades to regulate the fate of this deprived community. To Nehru, Colombo's persistent focus on the technicalities of numbers and its hostile attitude betrayed a worrisome illiberal posture towards non-Sinhala minorities as rightful citizens of the new state.[874] Instead of harking on deportation, he thus

---

[872] For a background on these "Plantation Tamils," see Hugh Tinker, *Separate and unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976).

[873] In a note to Sri Lankan PM D. S. Senanayake, Nov. 13, 1949: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 232. On the Plantation Tamils being disenfranchised from electoral rolls in 1952, Nehru refers to the act as "a mistake [because] the Indians there … are citizens of Ceylon today, and not citizens of India," May 1, 1952, in New Delhi: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 587, 99.

[874] Referring to Nehru's view as prescient and as still valid today, Indian Minister P. Chidambaram notes that "we [Indian government] always spoke about Tamils as covering both populations [Plantation and Sri Lankan Tamils], because they are connected and both suffer under the same problem of Sinhala nationalism" (Interview 036).

beckoned S. J. Kotelawala and D. S. Senanayake in October of 1954, "you should get their support," because "you should not create even an impression that in future you are going to penalize them [but instead] you [should] deal with these people directly, win them over".[875]

While New Delhi's position was influenced by constraints to absorb hundreds of thousands of migrants, it also reflected its liberal discomfort at the Ceylonese state's rising ethno-nationalist profile and its exclusivist obsession to compel a minority into forced exile. Speaking to parliament in 1957, Nehru this underlined that "we do not accept any persons who came under compulsion, who are compelled [to leave]."[876] This was a "human problem" and would have long-term effects, Nehru warned:

> *…if there are people here who lived for some years, I cannot just push them out. I cannot discriminate against them. [Whatever the number of Plantation Tamils who will eventually remain in Ceylon] do you want that large number to be, apart from the human aspect, more or less satisfied with life or it should become more and more dissatisfied, rebellious and troublesome with all those consequences?[877]*

Ten years later, coming in defense of a second bilateral agreement signed in October 1964, External Affairs Minister S. S. Singh reflected this Nehruvian approach, arguing that it would be impossible to just "leave them [Plantation Tamils] there and expose them to all the legislative measures, Ceylonisation of employment and Ceylonisation of trade and the like and then let them go helter-skelter."[878]

---

[875] Oct. 10 talks, in New Delhi: Nehru, *SWJN SS v27*, 152.

[876] Dec. 12: MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1957," 255. The Plantation Tamil's preferred to remain in Ceylon, but by 1959 the Ceylonese government had only accepted slightly more than 100,000 out of 850,000 citizenship applications. By 1964, more than 971,000 remained stateless: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 805, 50.

[877] Oct. 9, 1954: Nehru, *SWJN SS v27*, 166.

[878] MEA, "FAR 1964," 283.

While the two Tamil communities had distinct profiles and demands, they were both at the receiving end of Colombo's ethno-majoritarian policies and rising polarization, leading their representative organizations to identify with each other and cooperate. For example, the main organization of the Plantation Tamils, the Ceylon Workers Congress, spoke out in 1956 to condemn the new language policies, its acting president, K. Rajalingam referring to it as an "unfair law."[879]

India's prescient advice did not determine its posture during the 1956 crisis, but it influenced its negotiations with Ceylon and reflected a liberal and farsighted dimension in its strategic assessments. After the Sri Lankan Tamils mobilized for language parity in May 1961, Nehru thus noted that the Tamils of the North and East "are as much Ceylonese as anybody else … it is an entirely internal question [but] we are [also] interested for a variety of reasons, especially people in the South [and] where possible, we wish to help and take steps without any kind of interference".[880] While in the 1950s pragmatism dictated the prevalence of short-term imperatives and engagement, such long-term Indian assessments would rise in salience over the next two decades as the neighboring island gradually sunk into conflict.

b) 1987: prescribing liberalization "in principle and for our own security"

By the early 1980s, Nehru's foreseen "consequences" of continued discrimination potentially leading to a "dissatisfied, rebellious and troublesome" minority had realized in

---

[879] June 30, 1956: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 782-3. Similarly, the main organization of the Ceylon Tamils, the Federal Party, lobbied for the Plantation Tamils' demands, as a part of the larger Tamil cause, especially after the 1954 and 1964 bilateral agreements with India. Both the CWC and the FP eventually merged into the Tamil United Front in the early 1970s: Wilson, *Chelvanayakam*, 47-51, 64, 105-7.

[880] May 5, before parliament: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 815-6.

the form of a latent civil war, with a radicalized generation of Tamil insurgents fighting for secession. In just 15 years, from 1956 to 1970, the discriminatory Sinhalization policies had transformed Tamils (around 12% of total population) from an overrepresented to an underrepresented community, with its share in Sri Lanka's administrative services, for example, falling from 30% to 5% and in clerical services from 50% to 5%.[881] As a consequence, the moderate and non-violent generation of Tamil autonomists under the banner of the Federal Party and its leader S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, mainly form an urban intelligentsia from the upper-caste *Vellala*, gave way to a younger, militant, rural and lower-caste *Karaiyar* generation, which embraced violence, targeting the Sri Lankan Army, Sinhala civilians and moderate Tamils.[882] New Delhi responded with a coercive posture after the 1983 riots, culminating in the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987 and an Indian military presence to enforce conflict resolution.

Chapter 3 examined the strategic assessments that drove this intervention, chiefly among which were Colombo's non-cooperative attitude (*dispensation*), the dangers of the island's spiraling instability spilling-over into India (*order*), and the conflict's creeping internationalization (*geopolitics*). All three assessments were, however, influenced by a causal link that Indian decision-makers traced between the illiberal and ethno-nationalist nature of the Sri Lankan regime, on the one hand, and the escalating conflict and its security risks for India, on the other hand. In no other crisis response is the liberal and long-term focus in India's strategic thinking and posture so apparent, effectively aligning with short-term priorities and determining its posture.

---

[881] DeVotta, *Blowback*, 126.

[882] See Wilson, *Chelvanayakam*, 84 and following. On May 14, 1976, the Tamil United Liberation Front called for secession and Tamil *Eelam*: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1070.

India's assessments were based on an extraordinarily consensual diagnostic of Sri Lanka's spiraling strife as a symptom of the ethno-nationalist malady plaguing successive Sri Lankan governments since 1956. Whatever their background, Indian officials widely agreed with J. N. Dixit's assessment that the "rise of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka was the result of [the Sinhala majority's] systematic, orchestrated and deliberate, discrimination against the minority".[883] This diagnostic was in no way restricted only to Indian diplomats. Army Gen. Harkirat Singh, who oversaw the first deployment of the Indian Peacekeeping Force in late 1987, recalls that the "seeds of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka can be traced to the policy of successive governments in systematically sidelining the Tamil minority population."[884] The same views prevailed in the internal and external intelligence agencies.[885]

Beyond just principled preoccupation, Indian decision-makers were chiefly concerned about the *practical* effects on their country's domestic and regional security interests. In her annual speech on India's independence day, on August 15, 1984, PM I. Gandhi reiterated her commitment to non-interference in principle, but emphasized that "the manner in which a particular community is being attacked for the last so many years has

---

[883] March 10, 1989, in New Delhi: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 2345. For another official view from the period, see deputy EAM K. A. Khan's statement to Parliament in April 1985: "unfortunately, as a result of the accumulated frustration, they asked for a separate homeland in 1976" MEA, "FAR 1985," 98, see also 114-5. For views of diplomats who served in Sri Lanka in the 1970s and 1980s, see Coelho, *Palk Straits*, 103, 49; Abraham, "Emergence of the LTTE," 20; Rajendra M. Abhyankar, *Stuff happens: an anecdotal insight into Indian diplomacy* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2013), 48.

[884] Harkirat Singh, *Intervention in Sri Lanka: The IPKF Experience Retold* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), 20.

[885] For a domestic intelligence view, by a former IB director, see Narayanan, "Role of Intelligence," 117-8. For an external intelligence version, by a former RAW director, A. K. Verma, see: http://m.indiatoday.in/technology/story/research-and-analysis-wing-south-indians-lobby-suffers-a-set-back/1/337446.html.

come in the way of restoration of peace. … [which concerns India because] we want our neighbouring countries to be stable and friendly towards us."[886]

Sri Lanka's discriminatory policies were thus no longer seen as detrimental merely to the Tamils, but now also directly harming India. India's deputy head of mission in Colombo in 1983, R. Abhyankar, thus recalls that after the race riots, New Delhi began seeing the policies of the Sri Lankan government "no longer as only anti-Tamil, but also anti-India."[887] This did not mean, however, carving out a separate state – in fact, India's involvement was driven precisely by the quest to ensure the island-country's long-term territorial integrity.[888]

Referring to India's involved role, in 1984 External Affairs Minister N. Rao described it as an apprehensive "neighbor" providing good offices, "between a witness and a participant":

> *[we are] ready and willing to help them … so that they get over their own problems because their problem … becomes our problem. There is really no difference on the likelihood of their problem becoming our problem. It is just like two adjacent houses.[889]*

To protect India from the fire across the Palk Straits, New Delhi thus felt compelled to interfere, underlining that its respect for Sri Lanka's sovereignty depended on Colombo's capacity to keep its own house in order and deter nuisance. Three year later, in 1987, as violence escalated on the island, Rao's deputy, K. N. Singh, thus gave an early definition

---

[886] MEA, "FAR 1984," 237. Foreign Secretary M. K. Rasgotra recalls India's main message around 1983-84: "don't fear our intervention, but you [Government of Sri Lanka] created an issue that is [now] affecting us, [so] we expect you to deal with your problem" (Interview 040).

[887] Interview 001 and Abhyankar, *Stuff happens*, 54-61.

[888] The former IB director M. K. Narayanan recalls: "At no point India had an interest in a conflict or war with or in Sri Lanka, because we had enough problems on our borders, [in the] Northeast, [and in] Kashmir, so we realized that we needed to ensure that these [Tamil] people tapered their ambitions in a way which gave them all the benefits they required … without carving out a separate state" (Interview 077).

[889] May 7, before parliament: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1601.

of an Indian doctrine of humanitarian or liberal interventionism, noting that "even in International Law actions of one State which have repercussions on the affairs of another State cannot be strictly termed 'exclusive concern' of that State."[890] Domestic security took precedence in Indian assessments and was, in turn, seen as depending on a liberal regime change in Sri Lanka.

In 1985, PM R. Gandhi's had accordingly instructed his outgoing Ambassador J. N. Dixit to make the Sri Lankan government "responsive to India's security and strategic interests" and to facilitate the quest for a mutually acceptable political system that would "ensure the maximum fulfillment of legitimate Tamil aspirations," even while "not disrupting the unity and territorial integrity of a small neighbor."[891] In fact, as the insurgents expanded their operations across the island's Northeast and strengthened their secessionist claims, the latter aspect of PM R. Gandhi's instructions also hid a second and equally important mission to "bring an end to separatist Tamil terrorism."[892] As Dixit would recall later, "the LTTE's objective of creating a separate political entity, purely on the basis of [Tamil] language, ethnicity and religion, would be a challenge to the plural multi-dimensional democratic identity of India."[893]

Serving in the Intelligence Bureau at the time, M. K. Narayanan recalls that New Delhi's approach to the conflict and advice to Colombo, was a mirror image of India's own state-

---

[890] "… Inevitably no solution can be found without our good offices." March 19, 1987, before parliament: MEA, "FAR 1987," 94. The Joint Secretary on charge of Sri Lanka at the time, K. Sahdev, also recalls India's favorable view of Sri Lankan minister Gamini Dessanayake's statement supporting Indian involvement because "sovereignty does not consist of making trouble to neighbours," (quoted in by Sahdev in Interview 013).

[891] Dixit, *Assignment*, 4-5. For an overview of Indian objectives in Sri Lanka up to 1987, see p. 45.

[892] Quoted as a main aspect of the mission, albeit with the benefit of hindsight, in Dixit, *Assignment*, 214.

[893] Dixit, *Assignment*, 154. See also Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 51, 60.

building experience, successfully anchored in a 1956 constitutional change that reorganized its semi-federal states along ethno-linguistic lines:

> *The Sanskrit-Tamil [linguistic and civilizational] difference and potential for dispute is extraordinary, and [in India] we kept it together. Nehru had understood this historical [Tamil] dimension, and making English [India's] official language was part of this strategy behind the Indian ethos [and its success]. … if you have a strong linguistic minority, which has every right to claim independence, you got to play your cards and bring them in. That's the lesson we were passing on to Sri Lanka, both in principle and for our own security.*[894]

Throughout the 1980s, Indian officials therefore kept reminding their Sri Lankan counterparts that implementing liberal decentralization to respond to Tamil demands would strengthen Sri Lanka and preserve its territorial integrity, instead of weakening it as feared by many within the Sinhala majority.

Such prescriptions did not suddenly fall out of the sky, as often suggested by those arguing that the Indian government cynically instrumentalized (or even engineered) the conflict to weaken its neighbor and consolidate its alleged hegemonic ambitions. As noted in the previous section, and also alluded to in Chapter 3, India's approach was a mirror-view of its own experience in successfully defusing Tamil separatism, most notably by basing the 1956 States Reorganisation Act on ethno-linguistic criteria. Speaking in Jaffna in 1979, exactly four years before the "Black July" riots, the Indian High Commissioner T. Abraham had thus emphasized that "in a pluralist society such as in India and Sri Lanka, it is all the more necessary to ensure that such [language, creed, religious faith] differences

---

[894] Interview 077. See also EAM Bhagat, on March 24, 1986, in parliament: "It should be the duty of any wise government to accommodate their own people. You see our own example, how we have tried to accommodate the various sections." MEA, "FAR 1986," 72.

… are resolved through free discussion of ways and means, and not allowed to develop into divisive forces."[895]

However, while Colombo did formally cooperate after 1983, New Delhi's strategic and long-term view kept clashing with President Jayewardene's tactical and "short-sighted" approach.[896] After 1985, PM R. Gandhi thus denounced Colombo's obstinate quest for a military solution, which could only be "temporary measure" to "suppress the problem," and instead emphasized the importance of a "peaceful" and "negotiated" solution because "we must not look just to one or two years or five years [but] much further ahead, and see that the atmosphere is retrieved to an extent that the Tamils feel safe and confident."[897]

Finally, on July 29, 1987, after flying in to Colombo to sign the bilateral agreement, the Indian Prime Minister offered the most cogent definition of the causal link between democracy and security, which motivated Indian intervention on the island:

> *Where there is discrimination and discord, a nation's security becomes fragile. Unity cannot be imposed. It has to arise from a sense of common belonging, common participation, common endeavour and a common destiny. Both our countries have had the vision to choose democratic forms of government. Democracy is both the rule of the majority and the security of the minorities. No society can be wholly free of tension and friction. But democracy resolves them through discussion and accommodation.[898]*

---

[895] June 20, 1979: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.1*, 134. On July 23, 1983, PM I. Gandhi in her first official reaction to the "Black July" riots: "In societies like ours, civil liberties, in particular the rights of the minorities and respect for and promotion of these rights, assume special importance." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1467-8.

[896] Expression used by C. Garekhan (Interview 034).

[897] March 4, 1987 and April 9, 1985, in parliament: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1844; MEA, "FAR 1985," 102. In a letter to Jayewardene, on May 7, 1985, R. Gandhi emphasizes: "we have to think of a solution which will hold good not only for the immediate future but at least for the next fifteen to twenty years," Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.3*, 1678-9.

[898] In Colombo, on Sri Lanka's public TV broadcaster. See also his July 31 statement: MEA, "FAR 1987," 259, 52.

However, beyond good intentions, over the next 32 months India's involvement with a peak military deployment of 52,000 men failed catastrophically to disarm the insurgents and implement regime liberalization.[899]

Just a few days after the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) withdrew, in early 1990, Tamil Tiger leader T. V. Prabhakaran gloated about a "grand victory to our struggle," and referred to the Indian involvement as a "Himalayan blunder."[900] On the other extreme, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister R. Wijeratne boasted that "one of our soldiers is equal to ten IPKF men [Indian soldiers]," and hinted at an impending conflict resolution.[901] As expected by New Delhi, however, the cease-fire between the government and insurgents only lasted for a few more weeks: in July, Jaffna's Tamils suffered an unparalleled bombing spree from the Sri Lankan Air Force, and less than one year later, in March 1991, the Tigers responded by assassinating minister R. Wijeratna.[902] The Indians were finally gone, but the conflict raged on more viciously than ever.

c) 2009: persistent pursuit of liberalization despite short-term adjustment

The long-term, liberal and strategic assessments that determined India's coercive posture in the 1980s remained firmly entrenched in the 2000s, as the Sri Lankan Army went on the offensive in 2006 to defeat the insurgents and end the civil war, in 2009. Unlike in 1987, however, this time New Delhi engaged the Sri Lankan government, rendering both tacit and active assistance without which Colombo could not have achieved its military

---

[899] Around 1,200 were killed in action, and thousands injured: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.4*, 1981; Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.5*, 2444.

[900] Statement on April 1, 1990: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.5*, 2586.

[901] Wijeratne was a retired Lt. Col. of the Army: Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.5*, 2629, fn1. ISLR v5 p2629 fn1

[902] Wijeratne was killed by a bomb on March 2, 1991 along with five of his bodyguards and 13 civilians.

victory. Chapter 4 examined the Indian strategic assessments driving such engagement, including Colombo's cooperative attitude contrasting with the insurgent's obstinate separatism (*dispensation*), concern about the conflict escalating with devastating consequences across the border (*order*), and a balancing act between Chinese support and Western pressures (*geopolitics*).

The change in India's posture from the 1980s reflected adjustment to a new ground reality: T. V. Prabhakaran's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had virtually eliminated all rival organizations, established a *de facto* Tamil state in the North and East of the country, and subsequently refused to commit to any political solution short of secession, even while expanding his military capabilities. As this clashed with India's political approach to conflict resolution, it became apparent that, however improbable or difficult, Sri Lanka's regime liberalization required the prior elimination of the LTTE. Comparing the 1980s and the 2000s, M. K. Narayanan describes the adjustment:

> *So it was [the] converse of what we had previously [in the 1980s]. Eliminating the LTTE [now] became an important part of the need to preserve the Indian state. Instead of the [long-term] ideological or philosophical underpinnings we were worried of [in the 1980s], you were now first worried about [short-term] security implications of the LTTE for India, not so much in Sri Lanka. … [But] Our larger [long-term] interest continued … : take out the LTTE and implement 13A [constitutional amendments proposed by India in 1987].*[903]

In a 2008 interview, just as the LTTE defensive barriers collapsed under a formidable Sri Lankan Army offensive, the former director of India's external intelligence agency, A. K. Verma, emphasized presciently that "if the concerns of the Tamils are not satisfied by mutual dialogue, even if militarily defeated, the old ghosts will rise again to torment [Sri Lanka] later [because] whether or not the LTTE is vanquished, these [Tamil] aspirations

---

[903] Interview 077.

have a life of their own and will keep looking for fulfillment."[904] So while India looked the other way or secretly supported the Sri Lankan military offensive, it also advised Colombo to implement "13A", the acronymic mantra referring to the constitutional amendment enshrined in the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987, which New Delhi had prescribed to satisfy Tamil demands.[905]

While underlining that "the only way out is a negotiated, political settlement which meets the legitimate aspirations of all communities while respecting the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka," the Indian government was therefore signaling that a military *victory* on the operational front, against the LTTE, was not tantamount to a military *solution* of the conflict's deeper roots, of which the insurgents were only an expression. Such a settlement should, therefore, "include, among other things, a credible and genuine devolution package and implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution."[906]

In early 2009, as the final offensive raged on, Foreign Secretary S. S. Menon clarified this distinction and stressed the urgency of what India variably referred to as a "comprehensive" political solution, understanding or settlement:

> *There is no military solution to this problem, for instance, no matter how the military situation might fluctuate. One side might be up, down, today, tomorrow, whatever. … [But] there is a political aspect which needs work because until there is a political understanding within the*

---

[904] http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2008/10/old-ghosts-will-rise-again-if-sri.html.

[905] MEA, "AR 08-09," 15. Speaking after his Jan. 27, 2009 visit to Sri Lanka, EAM P. Mukherkee emphasized that "military victories offer a political opportunity to restore life to normalcy in the Northern Province and throughout Sri Lanka, after twenty three years of conflict," and referred to 1987's 13th amendment: Bhasin, *IFR 2009*, 1514. An Indian official working on Sri Lanka at the EAM at the time, recalls that India's policy was based on two "articles of faith": 1) to protect territorial unity and integrity of Sri Lanka "at all cost;" and 2) "13A as the only solution to tackle the conflict at its root". (Interview 020)

[906] MEA, "AR 06-07," iv. This definition and sequence was also widely acknowledged as driving policy by various Indian officials interviewed.

framework of a united Sri Lanka, within which all the communities in Sri Lanka are comfortable, you cannot speak of a political solution of the situation in Sri Lanka.[907]

After the end of the war, India was initially willing to give Sri Lankan President M. Rajapaksa the benefit of the doubt and concentrated efforts on assisting in massive relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction plans.

But as time went on, patience quickly ran out in New Delhi.[908] The Foreign Secretary at the time, N. Rao (2009-11), thus recalls that "after 2011, it gradually became clear that [President] Rajapaksa was not delivering on the promise [of a political devolution package]" but that India persisted on engagement because "only India could really make the difference in Sri Lanka" by playing a "delicate game" in its "soft underbelly": a) to ensure regime stability, given the controversial 2010 presidential elections, that could have led to a military coup by defeated candidate S. Fonseka; b) to impede the revival of LTTE or any other form of Tamil extremism; c) maintain good relations with the Sri Lankan government to preserve privileged access to relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction plans; and d) fulfill the Tamil minority's expectations about India, particularly after a "sense of betrayal" following the IPKF withdrawal in 1990.[909] In 2011, PM M. Singh thus reiterated that the "decimation of the LTTE was something

---

[907] Jan. 5, 2009 MEA Briefing: http://mea.gov.in/incoming-visit-detail.htm?5555. On March 1, EAM Mukherjee reiterated: "the Sri Lankan military success should be quickly followed by a political solution involving a credible devolution that will meet the legitimate aspirations of all communities, including the Tamils," Bhasin, *IFR 2009*, 102; MEA, "AR 09-10," 17.

[908] M. K. Narayanan recalls: "In 2009, India was riding the crest, at least until the elections [in early 2010]. 2009 was probably the best year we had. But once the Sri Lankan government got saddled, things changed … crux of the issue was 13A and at least as war went on we could say 'OK, let's wait', but after that not much longer," (Interview 077).

[909] Interview 023.

good … but the Tamil problem does not disappear, with the defeat of the LTTE" because "the Tamil population has legitimate grievances."[910]

Decreasing Indian patience would eventually lead to subsequent bilateral crises, not analyzed in detail in this dissertation, but which indicate the entrenched influence and salience of liberal and long-term thought in New Delhi's strategic assessments, even while its posture's specific policy calibration may vary. In March 2012, for example, India voted in favor of a country-specific UNHRC resolution, initiated and sponsored by the United States, which urged Sri Lanka to conduct an inquire into allegations about human rights abuses perpetrated by its Army in 2009.[911]

And just three months after taking the oath of office as India's 15th Prime Minister, in 2014, N. Modi hosted a delegation of Sri Lanka's Tamil National Alliance and "stressed the need for a political solution that addresses the aspirations of the Tamil community for equality, dignity, justice and self respect [and for] a political solution that builds upon the 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution."[912]

On his visit to the island in 2015, N. Modi became the first-ever Indian Prime Minister to visit the Tamil-majority city of Jaffna, and before the Sri Lankan parliament, implicitly prescribed his principle of "cooperative federalism:"

> *All of us in this region, indeed every nation of diversity, have dealt with the issues of identities and inclusion, of rights and claims, of dignity and opportunity for different sections of our societies. We have all seen its diverse expressions. …. Each of us has sought to address these complex issues in our own ways. … Sri Lanka has lived through decades of tragic violence and conflict. You have successfully defeated terrorism and brought the conflict to an end. You now stand at a*

---

[910] June 29, 2011 interaction with newspaper editors: Bhasin, *IFR 2011*, 660.

[911] Indian officials interviewed mention this was intended as a way to pressure President M. Rajapaksa to deliver on the political front and implement constitutional amendments: Foreign Secretary N. Rao (023), High Commissioner A. Prasad (008) and NSA S. S. Menon (078).

[912] Aug. 23: http://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-receives-tamil-national-alliance-delegation

moment of historic opportunity to win the hearts and heal the wounds across all sections of society.[913]

Commenting on this persistent thread in India's Sri Lanka policy, former NSA M. K. Narayanan thus recalls that it "often looks bad in appearance but reflects continuity and is far from over."[914]

3. Myanmar: Between Authoritarian Allure and Democratic Promises

India's strategic assessments during crises in Myanmar reflect a varying but persistent focus on the comparative short- and long-term advantages of different regime types, mainly between liberal democracy emphasizing state building through pluralism and decentralization, and military authoritarianism emphasizing order and centralization.

a) 1962: Acute authoritarian allure to ensure state survival, stability and security

New Delhi's assessments and engaging posture after the military coup of 1962, which marked the end of democratic rule and the advent of a new authoritarian order under General Ne Win, splendidly reflects Indian causal thinking on how, at least in the short-term, illiberal rule can be both necessary and beneficial. While similar to the case of Nepal, where it also engaged the authoritarian regime of King Mahendra after his coup of 1960, India's lesser leverage to shape events in Burma, however, makes its pragmatic and short-term focus more apparent, even while Indian officials also expressed their principled discomfort and skepticism about the regime's long-term success.

---

[913]On March 13, in Colombo: http://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/text-of-pms-address-to-the-sri-lankan-parliament.

[914] Interview 077.

Chapter 2's detailed examination of these strategic assessments demonstrated how decision-makers recognized the declining capacity of Prime Minister U Nu's democratic dispensation to exercise authority and solve internal rebellions as a liability for Indian domestic security (*dispensation* and *order*), which was compounded by the dangers of his geopolitical rapprochement to China (*geopolitics*). Indian assessments, however, pivoted on the issue of state capacity and stability: whether liberal or authoritarian, the Burmese state's survival was immediately at stake given its tremendous domestic challenges, with a variety of secessionist insurgencies battling its armed forces.

The primacy of such preoccupations about the neighbor's stability was reflected in India's positive response to the preceding "soft coup" of 1958, when democratic rule was interrupted for two years by a military caretaker government under General Ne Win. Despite domestic pressures, Nehru refused to classify it as a coup and referred to the takeover as being "in the interest of democracy."[915] The Indian Ambassador in Rangoon, L. Mehrotra, characterized the events as a "coerced abdication" and similarly legitimized the coup as being in the interest of domestic stability:

> *Nobody is so naïve as not to admit that the passing of power into the hands of the army during peace time is by no means a very desirable thing. But it is equally admitted that the conditions in the strife-torn country had become so bad as to warrant this unusual step.[916]*

Two years later, as the military interregnum came to an end, another Indian diplomat would echo the same approach, giving an overall positive evaluation of the generals' rule, as "their aims [are] praiseworthy and their results sometimes spectacular."[917]

---

[915] NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/58 p. 111.

[916] NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/58 p. 110.

[917] NAI, MEA 3(12)-R&I/60 p. 93.

India's decision to engage the authoritarian regime after the coup of March 1962 was therefore rooted in a dual assessment about military rule being not only inevitable, but also desirable. On the Indian Embassy's inputs to PM J. Nehru just a few days after the putsch, the No.2 a the time, E. Gonsalves, recalls that "we were fairly confident that the Generals were going to remain and there would be no return to the democratic set up." He went to reassuringly describe the Burmese Army as a "professional [organization], the main political force, like the Indian National Congress [ruling party] in India," and therefore as an indispensable guarantor of stability after the democratic experiment had faltered and failed.[918]

As bilateral relations gradually improved despite severe challenges over the next years, Indian assessments suggest a level of reassurance by Ne Win's focus on order, "slowly but surely amalgamating all the territories of the Union into a single, highly centralized Unitary State."[919] The Indian Ambassador R. D. Katari, who began his posting in May 1964, forwarded particularly positive assessments. As a retired Navy Chief, his views naturally placed greater emphasis on the benign effects of military rule, in particular on domestic stability and security, underlining the short-term benefits of greater Burmese internal order to India. Following Ne Win's February, 1965 visit to India, he thus refers to a "positive" and "improving trend" in bilateral relations.[920]

---

[918] In Rana, "Oral History Record of Ambassador Eric Gonsalves," 33-34. The second quote is from the interview (070): "We didn't think [at] that time that we could hold Burma to any higher standards than most of our other neighbors in Asia. Generals taking over [all around] was not a surprise and in trend with the time."

[919] NAI, MEA HI/1012(12)/64-I p. 19.

[920] NAI, MEA HI/1011(12)65 p. 34. Katari was also critical of bureaucratic delays and reluctance to engage the regime: "Ne Win would have dearly liked some support and sustenance from India, even if only on the moral plane. He even made a personal effort to achieve this [1965 visit]. Unfortunately we were in no mood to give this." Katari, *Sailor*, 137.

By 1965, relations had fully normalized.[921] The issue of expatriate and stateless Indians in Burma had been largely resolved (discussed in detail in Chapter 2), and India also appreciated Burma's neutral stance during its war with Pakistan, in September 1965.[922] Of greatest salience to New Delhi, however, was that the Burmese regime had been successfully sensitized to Indian concerns about its domestic security situation in the Northeast, which required cross-border counter-insurgency assistance from Rangoon and an eye on China.

Speaking to U.S. Secretary of State D. Rusk, in late 1963, Burma's Minister of Foreign Affairs thus noted that the generals were "quite aware of Indian sensitivities [border security and China] and are being extremely careful on this score."[923] Ambassador R. D. Katari, in turn, recalled that after he shared specific evidence on Indian insurgents' safe havens in the country's isolated Northern regions, around 1964-5, "they [Burmese] woke up to their responsibility … [and] set to with vigour, but only with partial success, to mount operations against the Naga [insurgent] traffic (…) This was certainly of help to us. Even more helpful was the fact that they kept us fed with intelligence on the movement of the rebels."[924]

However, such support did not blind Indian assessments from recognizing the regime's true colors. After 1962, Indian officials and leaders had refrained from making public statements criticizing Burma's authoritarian system, either excusing themselves with non-interference or by making contrived comments about the legitimacy of different political

[921] See e.g. EAM S. Singh, on Nov. 24, 1965, before parliament: "The relations with Burma have also shown considerable improvement over the last year and a half." MEA, "Foreign Affairs Record 1965," (New Delhi 1966), 337.

[922] Katari, *Sailor*, 143-4.

[923] Quoted in https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v23/d61.

[924] Katari, *Sailor*, 141, 46-7.

systems to achieve common objectives.[925] In private, however, their assessments betrayed their liberal instincts, categorically abhorring and demarcating India's parliamentary system from General Ne Win's autocratic regime.

In his annual report for 1964, just after arriving in Rangoon, Ambassador Katari thus refers to the "totalitarian" methods of the Revolutionary Council and to the generals as "people in a hurry," and also deplores the militarization of administration by Army official.[926] Reacting to a Burmese statement comparing and equating both country's political systems, in early 1964, the Indian deputy chief of mission and senior-most foreign service officer in Rangoon, E. Gonsalves, thus noted sarcastically: "the fact that our socialism differed from Burmese socialism in that ours is democratic, was of course conveniently overlooked."[927]

More importantly, Indian assessments also expressed a causal skepticism about its long-term sustainability. Commenting on a constitutional amendment that put Burma under single-party rule, E. Gonsalves, transmitted such pessimism rather candidly to New Delhi:

> *The creation of the [Burmese] socialist dictatorship will now proceed unhindered from any source. [But] it remains to be seen whether the elimination of all vocal opposition and criticism and the substitution of artificial adulation for all Government action will provide a better atmosphere for correcting the mistakes that any developing country and inexperienced Governments are bound to commit in considerable measure.[928]*

---

[925] See e.g EAM S. Singh, in Sept. 1964, to parliament: "The Burma Government now are engaged in a vast programme of socialisation for the purpose of achieving what they call 'Burmese way to Socialism'. It is not for us to quarrel with the internal policies of the Burma Government; indeed we appreciate their efforts, and the success of such efforts, to adopt a socialist way of life," MEA, "FAR 1964," 204.

[926] NAI, MEA HI/1011(12)65 pp. 19, 20-22.

[927] NAI, MEA HI/1012(12)/64-I p. 45.

[928] 1964 letter of CdA Eric Gonsalves to N P Alexander, Deputy Sec MEA, Apr 3, 1964, NAI HI/1012(12)/64-I p27-28. Commenting on the National Solidarity Preservation Law, announced in 1964 as a constitutional move to single-party rule under the Burma Socialist Programme Party.

b) 1988: The promises of liberalization overrule an exhausted autocracy

As General Ne Win's radical economic policies, international isolationism and inability to end insurgencies led the Burmese state onto a spiraling decline after the 1970s, E. Gonsalves' long-term assessment of 1964 proved prescient: devoid of internal freedom, the "socialist dictatorship" soon proved unable to correct "the mistakes that any developing country and inexperienced [g]overnments are bound to commit."[929]

As examined in Chapter 3, given the regime's isolation, weakness and non-cooperative attitude (*dispensation*), its inability to quell internal dissent and unwillingness to cooperate on counter-insurgency (*order*), and its rising alignment with China (*geopolitics*), Indian strategic assessments determined a posture of coercion, supporting regime liberalization during the 1988 crisis.

Such assessments denote a dual Indian causal link, on the decreasing efficacy of the authoritarian regime, and conversely the attractive promises of democratization. L. Pudaite, who served as India's ambassador to Yangon in the mid-1990s, recalled that while morally "bound to favour a democratic Myanmar", India's "vital interests compel active cooperation with whatever regime the country has." [930] While broadly representative of India's default posture, by pitting values against interests such a simplistic definition fails, however, to reflect the short- and long-term calculus in India's changing posture (coercion in 1988, followed by engagement in 1991).

Even before the revolt of 1988, Indian officials had diagnosed the long-term exhaustion of the authoritarian regime as an insurmountable obstacle to improvement in bilateral

---

[929] Apr. 3, 1964: NAI, MEA HI/1012(12)/64-I p. 27-28.

[930] Pudaite, *Mizoram and look east policy*, 47.

relations. S. Devare, who was sent to Rangoon as Counselor (1980-2) with the specific

mission of improving relations recalls seeing "great opportunities in Rangoon, but the

serious problems in Burma like the ethnic insurgency, complete military dominance and

as a result the closed nature of the society etc. stood in the way."[931] T. P. Sreenivasan,

who succeeded him in the mid-1980s, as deputy chief of mission, laments in a similar tone

that "one of the early democracies in our neighborhood, with which India had fraternal

relations, became the laboratory of a pseudo-socialistic megalomaniac."[932]

After repeated attempts to engage failed, the resignation of Ne Win and the possibility of

free elections were thus naturally welcome in New Delhi. The Joint Secretary in charge of

Burma at the time of the revolt, K. Sahdev recalls: 1) "We don't sponsor or impose pro-

democracy, but when it came up [in Burma] we looked favorably to it, that was our

natural inclination;" 2) The assessment was that the "democratic movement would

succeed, reform the country and benefit India" and 3) The presence of Aung San Suu

Kyi in Burma was a factor, because "we felt that she would be more favorable to us [than

Ne Win]."[933]

For the next two years, until 1990, India extended moral and logistical support to pro-

democracy forces in Burma, expecting that their success and a consequent inter-

democratic bond between both countries would have a positive effect on bilateral

relations. As late as 1990, the Indian government kept emphasizing how normalization

---

[931] Sudhir T. Devare, "Oral History: India's 'Rediscovery' of the East," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 6, no. 3 (2011): 340.

[932] Sreenivasan, *Words*, 58.

[933] Interview 013. See Chapter 3 for India's principled posture, welcoming and supporting democratic change, and free elections in 1990. This continued up to 1991: e.g. on Feb. 18, 1991, the MEA's official spokesperson expressed a "very natural sympathy that India has for the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar," MEA, "FAR 1991," 24.

and improvement in the relationship were contingent on further political liberalization in Burma. Reacting to the election of May, 1990, the Ministry of External Affairs noted:

> *The first genuine elections held in Myanmar after almost twenty-eight year s resulted in an overwhelming verdict in favour of democratic forces. Despite this clear verdict, power has not been transferred to the elected representatives of her people. We hope this will be done soon so that normalcy can return in the country, facilitating the revival and strengthening of our bilateral relations with Myanmar.[934]*

However, as it soon became apparent that the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was firmly entrenching itself as a reformed autocratic avatar of Ne Win's regime, the short-term focus once again took precedence in India's assessments after 1991. On becoming Foreign Secretary, in November 1991, J. N Dixit recalls Myanmar as reflecting a "dilemma [of] dealing with the contradictory demands of being supportive of democratic forces, and interacting with the de facto government".[935] He was, however, speaking in public, and thus exaggerating the dilemma for domestic consumption: over the next months, under PM N. Rao's instructions, he developed a superbly pragmatic and semi-clandestine policy of engagement towards the Burmese junta, beginning with first official talks in the Spring of 1992.[936]

Two areas reflect the Indian causal link on how Burma's democratization was expected to benefit India's domestic and external security. First, given Ne Win's association with China in the 1980s, New Delhi foresaw that liberalization would lead to a geostrategic reorientation of Yangon away from Beijing and towards India and Southeast Asia. Commenting on this geopolitical driver of India's pro-democracy policy, I. P. Singh, India's Ambassador in Rangoon during 1988, recalls:

---

[934] MEA, "AR 90-91," ix.

[935] J. N. Dixit, *My South Block years: memoirs of a foreign secretary* (New Delhi: UBS 1996), 47.

[936] Dixit, *Neighbours*, 326.

Burma fits into China's strategic design to have both the western and eastern flanks of India under the control of its close friends [the other one being Pakistan] … Thus, India has reason to have more than ideological interest in a democratic government coming to power in Burma. Seen from this angle, the people of Burma, while fighting for restoration of democracy in their country, are also indirectly fighting for India's security.[937]

But after 1992, as the SLORC junta consolidated its power after an internal purge and announced economic reforms and a gradual opening of the country, the long-term link between Myanmar's democracy and India's external security thus weakened, favoring short-term engagement instead.[938]

Second, in terms of Indian domestic security (the strategic assessment about *order* in Myanmar), New Delhi's assessments focused on what regime type could best enhance the neighboring state's internal cohesion and pacification.[939] In 1988, given the chronic shortcomings of Ne Win's autocratic regime to strengthen cohesion since 1962, Indian assessments focused on liberalization through multi-party and electoral politics as an incentive for the ethnic minority insurgencies to join an inclusive and pluralist regime, which would, in the long run, foster stability and thus benefit the security of India's Northeastern border states.

The reasons were clear, as several ethnic insurgent groups supported the pro-democracy uprising of 1988, under the joint umbrella organization National Democratic Front/Democratic Alliance of Burma. The military crackdown of August, 1988, thus risked further destabilization and increasing incentives for the ethnic minorities to secede. For example, in September 1988, the Chin National Front sent a letter to PM R. Gandhi

---

[937] Singh, "India-Burma Relations," 11.

[938] For two security-centric views arguing for normalization after 1992 due to China and the changing geopolitical environment: P. Stobdan, "China's forays into Burma: implications for India," *Strategic Analysis* 16, no. 1 (1993); Banerjee, "Myanmar and Indian Security concerns."

[939] Ambassador I. P. Khosla, who served in Myanmar, offers a comprehensive discussion on the primacy of state cohesion in India's policy towards its Eastern neighbor, and the short-term limits and long-term strengths of a liberal regime in enhancing it: Khosla, "Cohesion and Liberalism."

"seeking merger [of Myanmar's Chin areas] with the Indian Union", its demands supported by thousands of protesting, co-ethnic Mizos in the Indian state of Mizoram.[940] Similarly, the Kachin Independence Army/Organisation offered crucial support to India's external intelligence and counter-insurgency operations after 1989. B. B. Nandy, a senior operative for India's external intelligence agency RAW, recalls that they did so "acknowledging New Delhi's strong support to the democratic movement in Burma.[941]

However, as the SLORC changed policies in late 1989, pursuing a massive military modernization program, liberalizing the economy, and implementing a new counter-insurgency strategy that successfully calibrated force and political inducements, Indian assessments focused on the short-term benefits of engaging an autocratic regime that delivered unprecedented state cohesion.[942] Such assessments were informed by Indian observations of other modes of gradual liberalization across Southeast Asia, in the 1990s, which tended to be state-managed and top-down, with the military often playing a crucial role, whether in Thailand or in Indonesia.[943]

Looking back at his decision to focus on the short-term and engage the authoritarian regime in 1991, the Foreign Secretary at the time, J. N. Dixit recalls that it was driven by a "clinically rational factor" because it assessed that the military regime was deeply entrenched and augmenting Myanmar's state stability. In any case, he notes,

---

[940] Lintner, *Great game*, 127-9.

[941] Nandy, "Security of the north-east Himalayan frontier: challenges and responses," 172-4. See also Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast*, 175-7. And http://www2.irrawaddy.org/print_article.php?art_id=5644.

[942] The success of this new counter-insurgency strategy is examined in detail in Chapter 3. A retired Indian ambassador with experience in Myanmar and the region, notes that after 1992, Myanmar moved on to an "experimental and pragmatic mix" of authoritarianism with economic liberalization, so "for India, it [was] necessary to accept that in Myanmar … the liberal democratic paradigm will not automatically come about [in the short-term, but develop gradually instead]." Khosla, "Cohesion and Liberalism," 1640, 68-9.

[943] Retired Indian Army official D. Banerjee refers to the possibility of Myanmar following the "Indonesian model" of transition: Banerjee, "Myanmar and Indian Security concerns," 704.

democratization could be "risky" and India had no reasons "to unilaterally assume responsibility of creating democracies in other countries."[944] After retiring, he further predicted that that SLORC was "likely to remain in control in the foreseeable future [and that therefore] India should not have any hesitation in building on the relations that we have initiated [in 1992]."[945]

While the influence of the long-term and causal link equating liberal democracy to security thus declined in strategic assessments about the neighbor in the early 1990s, it did not disappear, as indicated by Dixit's cautionary note that engagement "does not imply any dilution of India's commitment to democracy [in Myanmar]," at least in principle and in the long term.[946]

c) 2007: long-term thought, short-term deeds

J. N. Dixit's expression of India's principled "commitment" to democracy in Myanmar would be put to test in 2007, as the neighboring country's military regime faced a massive pro-democracy uprising.

Indian voices rose to pressure the government to take the long-term view on the advantages of political liberalization in Myanmar, analyst C. R. Mohan, for example, noting that New Delhi should not be debating "whether [to] intervene in favour of the pro-democracy movement, but how and on what terms," while journalist S. Bhaumik beckoned officials to refrain from perceiving pro-democracy support as a moral "luxury,"

---

[944] Dixit, *Neighbours*, 326, 30.

[945] Dixit, *My South Block years: memoirs of a foreign secretary*, 171.

[946] Dixit, *Neighbours*, 328.

but instead as "a sound investment in securing [India's] own position in the North East [border states]." [947] As examined in Chapter 4, however, the Indian government's strategic assessments (on *dispensation*, *order* and *geopolitics*) ended up prioritizing the short-term returns of engaging the autocratic regime and pursue the historic advance in bilateral relations since 2000.

While the Indian government's deeds betrayed such an immediate focus, its public statements kept expressing a principled commitment to democracy in Myanmar, qualified as a "secondary" but not irrelevant issue.[948] This principled commitment did not start under the "liberal" UPA government, in 2004, but was present from the start of India's normalization with Myanmar in 2000, under the preceding "nationalist" NDA/BJP government of PM A. B. Vajpayee. In 2003, the MEA's spokesperson, N. Sarna, thus emphasized that "our policy remains that national reconciliation should be carried forward as should the movement towards democracy. We have called for the early release of Aung Sang Sui Kyi, who has been recognized by the world as a leader of the democratic movement."[949]

In the same vein, in late 2004, PM M. Singh underlined that "we would welcome [the] early realization of the goal of multi-party democracy based on national reconciliation and an inclusive approach." [950] These were not just empty words for domestic consumption. Two months earlier, in October, the bilateral joint statement on occasion

---

[947] C. R. Mohan, "South Block's Burma Shell," *The Indian Express:* Sept. 28, 2007: http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/south-block-s-burma-shell/221843/0; and Bhaumik, Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast, 280.

[948] Indian Ambassador R. Bhatia, in 2004, to the U.S. Ambassador and other Western diplomats in Yangon: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04RANGOON1374_a.html.

[949] Interacting with journalists on Aug. 11, 2003: Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 375.

[950] Dec. 21, 2004, in parliament: Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 414.

of Myanmar head of state's visit to India (Senior General Than Shwe) had reserved two

substantial paragraphs on the issue of democratic reforms: "[the] Indian side noted the

resolve of the Myanmar leadership to build an enduring democratic system in Myanmar

and expressed support for national reconciliation and early transition to democracy in

Myanmar."[951] Even if not determining posture, such expressions of support reflected the

latent salience of regime type in Indian strategic thought, and how it viewed

democratization of Myanmar as both desirable and inevitable in the long-term.[952]

India's causal regime preference was rooted in its expectation of how the political

transition would unfold, which it communicated as advice to the State Peace and

Development Council (SPDC), both in public and in private: formal democratization,

through free elections, could only progress in tandem with a more "inclusive"

liberalization, by bringing in banned parties such as the National League for Democracy

(NLD) and by implementing a wider "national reconciliation" between the Burmese-

dominated central state institutions and the ethnic minority insurgencies.[953] Responding

to the 2007 crisis, PM M. Singh thus reiterated India's position that "the reform process

---

[951] Oct. 29: Bhasin, *IFR 2004*, 955. See also MEA, "Annual Report 2003-04," (New Delhi 2004), 25-6.

[952] For a contrarian view: "India's 'Tower of Babel' of perceptions, interests and voices much impedes the definition of a clear roadmap in Burma, including for a democratizing agenda," Renaud Egreteau, "A passage to Burma? India, development, and democratization in Myanmar," *Contemporary Politics* 17, no. 4 (2011): 480. It is, naturally, discussable how clearly these objectives were defined, but such a roadmap was ominously present in Indian strategic thought, even if only with limited influence on practice, due to contingent short-term requirements analyzed in Chapter 4.

[953] See e.g. the MEA's Annual Report for 2007-08, noting in meetings with their respective counterparts, the Indian PM and EAM conveyed "that the national reconciliation and political reform process initiated by the Myanmar authorities should be broad-based and inclusive including Daw Aung Saan Suu Kyi and the various ethnic nationalities and should be carried forward expeditiously towards a satisfactory conclusion," MEA, "AR 07-08," 11. See also the March 7, 2006 briefing by Foreign Secretary S. Saran: Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 1402.

should be broad based, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [of the NLD] and the various ethnic nationalities, and that it should be carried forward expeditiously."[954]

Indian officials recall that their dual mantra of "democracy" and "national reconciliation" at the time was not coincidental, but reflecting their view that being interdependent, both were equally necessary for a successful transition and sustainable liberal regime. R. Bhatia, India's Ambassador in Yangon in the mid-2000s, thus recalls that "we realized that the civilian-military balance, democratization, and [ethnic] conflict between Burman majority and the minorities were linked, and that the latter was actually [the] more complex challenge."[955]

S. Saran, who dealt with Myanmar as ambassador in Yangon in 1997-99 and then as Foreign Secretary (2004-06) recalls that India packaged its advice to the SPDC carefully, cautioning it about the long-term need for greater regime liberalization and inclusiveness: "we only pushed the envelope a little, telling them 'you yourself wanted democratization.'" India's long-term objective was thus to help the SPDC "find [an] inclusive political dispensation to allow ethnic groups to be part and parcel of Myanmar's political system."[956] His successor, S. S. Menon (2006-09), confirms: in Myanmar, India saw "regime stability and [its] inclusiveness as being interdependent."[957]

Not surprisingly, such thought was reflective of India's own experience, as expressed by Foreign Secretary, R. Mathai in August 2012, just as Myanmar lifted media censorship for the first time in half a century:

---

[954] Nov. 21, 2007, on his return from Singapore, after meeting Myanmar's Prime Minister there: http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=32897.

[955] Interview 004.

[956] Interview 028.

[957] Interview 078.

India remains committed to extending all possible assistance and support to the process of national reconciliation and the further strengthening of democracy in Myanmar. Our own experience is that in fact these processes are interlinked and democracy helps take national reconciliation forward both in the sense of bringing communities together and dealing with the gap between rich and poor.[958]

Similarly, New Delhi's repeated expressions of commitment to "non-interference" were more than just a smokescreen to hide short-term interests or to deflect Western pressures against engaging the military regime. Indian officials recognized that, however slowly, regime liberalization was advancing gradually and irreversibly since the late 1990s, through an unprecedented economic opening, a series of cease-fires with the ethnic insurgencies, and a constitutional process towards civilian rule.[959]

Reflecting its experienced concern about the perils of regime transition, especially if induced or coerced from abroad, India feared that external pressure would risk a reversal into further autocracy, isolation and internal destabilization. As early as 2003, Foreign Secretary K. Sibal, had therefore emphasized that while India supported the "movement of Myanmar towards democracy, internal reconciliation solutions must be found from the inside … [and] there should not be a tendency to impose solutions from outside or try to accelerate artificially the process of internal reconciliation through sanctions and pressure."[960] This explains Indian officials' insult and exasperation when, during his address to the Indian parliament, in 2010, U.S. President B. Obama implicitly criticized

---

[958] Aug. 17, 2012, in Imphal, in a keynote address on a conference on "India and her Neighbours," Bhasin, *IFR 2012*, 818. Media censorship was lifted on August 20.

[959] The former RAW representative in Yangon, for example, recalls that, "[in the late 1990s] we were convinced that [the] regime would eventually reform, so we didn't need U.S. emissaries to tell us what to do in Myanmar," (P. Heblikar, Interview 047). Waving off American pressures to predict, In 2006, when democratization would happen, India's Ambassador in Yangon, B. K. Mitra, is reported to have answered: "It can happen in ten years or tomorrow." https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06RANGOON612_a.html.

[960] Bhasin, *IFR 2003*, 651. See also PM M. Singh's statement, on Dec. 14, 2005, after meeting Myanmar's SPDC leader: "the answer [on how to build democracy] has to be found by the people of Myanmar themselves. (…) it was not my purpose to advise him what political arrangements they should have," Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 785-6.

India's engagement policy towards Myanmar, which had been clearly communicated to, and allegedly understood by Washington via bilateral dialogues since the mid-2000s.[961]

When the SPDC generals finally opened up the regime in 2011, holding the country's first free elections since 1960 and morphing into civilian and multi-party democratic rule, the Indian External Affairs Minister thus gleefully welcomed the "winds of change blowing through Myanmar" as a vindication of its policy of engagement, as well as an inter-democratic bond conducive to better bilateral relations.[962]

As noted one year later by India's top diplomat, it "certainly is a vindication of our policy of engagement that we have been able to keep a good dialogue with the Myanmar Government."[963] During President Thein Sein's 2011 visit to India, the first of a civilian head of state from Burma/Myanmar in more than half a century, the Indian Prime Minister M. Singh thus "expressed readiness to share India's own experiences in evolving parliamentary rules, procedures and practices."[964]

---

[961] This dialogue is analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 4. On Nov. 8, 2010, U.S. President B. Obama while addressing the Indian parliament, in New Delhi: "Faced with such gross violations of human rights, it is the responsibility of the international community - especially leaders like the United States and India - to condemn it. And if I can be frank, in international fora, India has often shied away from some of these issues." http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/08/remarks-president-joint-session-indian-parliament-new-delhi-india.

[962] March 9, 2012, at the Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS, Singapore: "Our relations will therefore assume even greater prominence for mutual benefit." Bhasin, *IFR 2012*, 23.

[963] May 25, 2012: Bhasin, *IFR 2012*, 1170. The most recent Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, G. Mukhopadhyay (2013-16), however, notes that while India's morally "conflicted relation" with the authoritarian regime ended in 2011, the "irony is that [we] now finds ourselves facing great competition from other countries," which suggests that liberalization has not immediately translated into direct benefits for India (Interview 048).

[964] Oct. 14 joint statement: Bhasin, *IFR 2011*, 1138.

Conclusion

In the arc of unrest stretching along India's periphery from Iran and Pakistan in the west to Bangladesh and Burma in the east, Indian leaders may yet find that democrats make better and more predictable neighbors than dictators.[965]

Daniel Twining, U.S. German Marshall Fund

American analyst D. Twining's conjecture on how India "may yet find that democrats make better and more predictable neighbors than dictators" is correct except for two issues, as illustrated in the cases analyzed in this chapter: 1) India already finds, and has found for at least half a century, that "democrats" make "better" neighbors, at least in principle and in the long-term; and 2) India's practice and experience suggests that "dictators" are often not only necessary but also desirable because they make neighbors more "predictable," at least in the short-term.

Contingent demands have often required Indian decision-makers to focus on the short-term, trading off the prospects of future liberalization for the guarantees of present order and security. Similarly, the illiberal reversals across the region in the 1950s-60s and the failed coercive involvement in Sri Lanka during the 1980s, in particular, have further ingrained a sense of pragmatism in Indian officials on how long and twisted the road to liberal democracy can be in their regional neighborhood.

The following specific conclusions can be drawn from this chapter's re-examination of India's regime crisis response in nine case studies:

1. *Short and Long-term horizons*: Indian assessments are influenced by a short/long-term and cost-benefit analysis on the neighboring country's regime type. This may not always have

---

[965] Twining, "India's Relations with Iran and Myanmar: "Rogue State" or Responsible Democratic Stakeholder?," 32.

a determinant effect, but it reflects Indian officials' recognition that specific political systems (regime types) employ different state-building strategies, which, in turn, impact India's domestic and external security.

2. *Principled and long-term liberal preference*: Ideally, and especially in the long-term, India would prefer all its neighboring state's to be liberal and pluralist democracies, because it favorably assess such regimes to be a) more inclined to cooperate with India given the inter-democratic bond (*dispensation*), b) more capable of providing sustainable stability and conflict resolution (*order*), and c) less given to extra-regional balancing (*geopolitics*).

3. *Short-term advantages of illiberal regimes*: In principle, Indian officials morally abhor illiberal systems, but pragmatically recognize that illiberal (especially authoritarian and centralized) regimes can be both necessary and desirable in the short-term to a) accelerate decision-making capacity, reliability and celerity (*dispensation*), b) increase state cohesion and stability through force (*order*), and c) offer external security guarantees (*geopolitics*).

4. *Perils of regime transition, from infancy to maturity*: The cost-benefit analysis in Indian strategic assessments (Table 7) also reflects a dynamic understanding of regime trajectories and their transition. The Indian strategic thought analyzed in this chapter suggests that, in the short term, liberal regimes will traverse a risky infant phases of instability that can be detrimental to India, but then gradually increase their beneficial effects as they mature, in the long term. Conversely, in the short term, infant illiberal regimes will often reinstitute order and state cohesion that can be beneficial to India, but then gradually increase their detrimental effects on India, in the long term, as they face growing internal dissent and instability.

5. *The liberal dimension in strategic culture*: Finally, the regime-centric analysis of Indian assessments and posture during regime crises in its neighborhood exposes a liberal dimension in the strategic culture identified in Part I of this dissertation. Reflecting extraordinary continuity, this culture also reflects a capacity to balance exigencies and preferences, and to navigate an extraordinary complex and illiberal neighborhood. The case of Nepal, in particular, indicates a persistent Indian push for liberalization there as being in its long-term interests – whether in 1950, 1960, 1990 or 2005.

Far from impulsive or naïve, this liberal approach reflects pragmatism, patience and strategic acumen based on learning and experience, for example by accepting short-term illiberal reversals and refraining from tempting "quick-fix" interventionism, in the interest of long-term and more sustainable liberalization. This does not mean that India always "gets it right" – far from it – but reveals a culture of regional crisis response and involvement that is strategic, liberal, and prudent.

Table 8: Short- and long-term assessments (liberal and illiberal regimes)				
Time period and regime type / **Assessment type and example**	**SHORT-TERM (infant regime)**		**LONG-TERM (mature regime)**	
	Illiberal	**Liberal**	**Illiberal**	**Liberal**
DISPENSATION — **Regime strength**	(+) Fast entrenchment	(−) Weak legitimacy and institutions	(−) Weakening: growing internal dissent	(+) Deepening entrenchment, robust
DISPENSATION — **Communication**	(+) Single counterpart, concentrated decision-making	(−) Competing actors, diffuse decision-making	(−) Increasing "noise" of competing factions	(+) Alternative channels; institutionalized relations
DISPENSATION — **Attitude**	(+) Broadly cooperative	(−) Competitive "anti-India" electoral politics	(−) Decreasing cooperation, rising hostility	(+) Broadly cooperative
ORDER — **State cohesion**	(+) Increases: coercive enforcement	(−) Fragmentation and electoral competition	(−) Decreasing cohesion,	(+) Increases exponentially after unstable transition
ORDER — **New conflict**	(−) Moderate risk: policies of centralization and exclusion	(−) Moderate risk: dissent and opt	(−) Extremely high risk	(+) Very low risk
ORDER — **Conflict resolution**	(+) High capacity, through inducements and coercion	(−) Low capacity: few incentives	(−) Very low chances, conflicts chronic	(+) Rising capacity to develop inclusive solutions.
GEOPOLITICS — **Balancing**	(−) Moderate incentives to find extra-regional support	(−) Weakness warrants extra-regional support	(−) Rising incentives to rely on extra-regional support	(+) Decreasing incentives to balance
GEOPOLITICS — **Alignment**	(−) Light tendency towards autocratic regimes	(+) Light tendency towards democratic powers	(−) Autocratic alliances, hostile towards India	(+) Liberal and inter-democratic peace

CONCLUSION TO PART II: THE LIBERAL DIMENSION IN INDIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

Part II of this dissertation examined the liberal sources and effects on Indian strategic thought and practice in the neighborhood. By eschewing the simplistic binary between "interests" and "values," our case studies indicate that India's regional involvement does, indeed, reflect a concern about the particular regime type of its neighboring states. The three typical strategic assessments (*dispensation*, *order* and *geopolitics*) thus reflect a concern about how particular systems of government – more or less liberal – lead to different attitudes towards India, state-building strategies, and geopolitical alignments.

Chapter 5 offered an introductory view on 1) the principled Indians support for pluralist regimes abroad; 2) the causal sources of such principled support, based on India's domestic experience with liberal democracy; 3) India's sense of exceptionalism in the region, portraying liberal democracy as a necessary and inevitable system of government worldwide, particularly in countries with ethno-linguistic and religious diversity. It then proceeded to show how India's democratic politics and liberal society indirectly influence the government's posture towards neighboring states.

Chapter 6 examined the regime-centric dimension in India's regional strategy as a key indicator of the liberal component in its foreign policy. While India identifies with liberal, democratic and pluralist regimes in principle, and recognizes their distinct advantages in providing stability, order, and security, this does not always translate into strategic practice of supporting them.

The case studies re-examined illustrate the strategic nature of India's cost-benefit analysis in the short- and long-term: India often choses to engage illiberal regimes in the short-term, even while recognizing that liberalization is inevitable in the long-term. India tends to engage (and favor) illiberal regimes in the short-term to deliver more efficiently, and switch to a coercive pro-democracy stance once these regimes show decreasing capacity to deliver, whether on cooperation with India, or internally in terms of state cohesion and domestic order.

CONCLUSION

1. Summary and main findings

This dissertation was driven by a puzzling variation in India's degree and direction of involvement during crises in neighboring countries. In terms of *degree*, the Indian government's response varies between the extremes of inaction and military intervention, with several intermediary modes of interference. In terms of *direction*, the Indian government's posture has also varied: in some cases it engages and even supports autocratic regimes, while in other cases it supports pro-democracy forces and regime liberalization. What explains such change?

In 2005, India's Foreign Secretary, S. Saran emphasized that "while democracy remains India's abiding conviction, the importance of our neighbourhood requires that we remain engaged with whichever government is exercising authority in any country."[966] India's

---

[966] Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 335.

strategic practice in the region shows that while engagement is, indeed, the default policy, it has also pursued various modes of coercive involvement in neighboring countries, which contradict its professed adherence to the principle of non-interference.

To explain such variation in India's behavior, and to also understand when and how it gets involved, the dissertation examined different regime crises in the three neighboring countries of Nepal, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and Myanmar (Burma), across three time periods (1950s-60s, 1980s, 2000s). In each of these nine crises, neighboring countries underwent a critical event or period of change (whether a coup, an uprising, or another form of instability), which affected, or threatened to affect Indian security.

Chapter 1 offered a broad overview of the historical foundations and development of India's regional strategy, and reviewed the literature and debates on the country's strategic culture. It forwarded three propositions:

- The Indian state's democratic identity is exceptionalist, but its material weakness and geographically isolation constrain its capacity to conform to high expectations from its Western and other democratic peers. India is a proud but also weak and isolated democracy.

- The popular allegation that India lacks a strategic culture is rooted in a wide divergence between Indian strategic *practice* and its exceptionalist *rhetoric*. Scholars tend to focus on the latter, given the lack of archival materials, the poverty of empirical studies, as well as ideological and political reasons. This myth is further perpetuated by Indian open society's self-criticism and anxiety about China and other illiberal "threats". The result is an ossified speech by Indian leaders and

363

officials, and scholarly narratives about India's foreign policy being strategically deficient because allegedly driven by idealism.

- Similarly, despite the revolutionary nature of independent India's *rhetoric* on non-interference and other exceptionalist principles after 1947, Indian *practice* in the region indicates extraordinary continuity from the colonial *Raj*, whether in terms of security, liberalism, or interventionism. This post-colonial divergence affects the literature, public debate and official discourse on India's neighborhood policy, which oscillates between reflexive hegemonic bullying, on the one hand, and benign exceptionalism, on the other hand.

Part I of the dissertation provides case study-oriented insights into the decision-making processes that drove Indian responses to the nine crises in the three neighboring states of Nepal, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Myanmar (Burma), across three periods. What specific factors and cost-benefit analyses determined India's response, and its degree and direction of involvement in those crises?

By reconstructing policy debates in the government, the case studies in **Chapters 2, 3, and 4** suggest that India's posture, degree and direction of involvement in each regional crisis is determined by a combination of three strategic assessments:

- The neighboring regime's relative strength and attitude towards India, and alternatives from opposition or feuding factions (*dispensation*)
- The risk of the neighboring state's crisis or internal conflict spilling over into India, affecting its domestic security (*order*); and
- The neighboring regime's external alignment, and the consequent risk of involvement by extra-regional powers at the expense of India (*geopolitics*).

Together, these three strategic assessments guide Indian policymakers to set objectives, take decisions and determine India's crisis posture, whether one of inaction or intervention, engagement or coercion. *Dispensation*, *order* and *geopolitics* thus serve as a key to decode when, why and how India responds to a neighboring state's crisis. Their determinant effect overrides alternative explanation based on ideology, leadership, or any other factor. The extraordinary continuity of these assessments across time, from at least the 1950s to the 2000s, forms the basis of India's strategic culture towards the region.

Part II of the dissertation proceeds to assess to what extent this strategic culture of crisis response and involvement in the region is also shaped by India's liberal democratic identity. Do Indian decision-makers recognize that different regime types (democratic, autocratic, and more or less liberal) bring specific dividends and disadvantages, and if so, how does that shape the degree and direction of involvement in the neighborhood?

Chapter 5 offers an introductory overview to the liberal dimension in Indian foreign policy. When Indians express their principled support for democracy abroad, they do so for *causal* reasons, associating liberal regimes with greater stability and security, based on India's own experience since 1947. This utilitarian definition of liberal democracy has grown stronger over time, fueling a rising sense of exceptionalism that portrays 1) liberal democracy as the best system of government, which is presented as both necessary and inevitable for all countries in the world; and 2) India's liberal, decentralized and pluralist democracy as a model that provides benchmarks to be followed by other countries with high ethno-linguistic, religious and other forms of diversity, especially in South Asia.

The second part of the chapter then proceeds to show how India's open society and democratic institutions exert an *indirect* liberal influence on the government's policies

towards neighboring states. A cursory re-examination of the case studies indicates a deep state-society embeddedness, with influence operating through various informal channels, including cross-border civil society links, the Indian parliament, and regional political parties. While not determinant, such domestic pressures can complicate or facilitate the governments' policy objectives, for example by a) delaying engagement with an authoritarian regime or, b) conversely, by accelerating engagement with forces that favor democratization.

Chapter 6 presents the key finding of the dissertation, namely that India's strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement is *directly* influenced by its liberal democratic identity. By linking India's three strategic assessments (*dispensation*, *order*, *geopolitics*) to different regime types – democratic, authoritarian, more or less liberal – the chapters re-examine the nine case studies to show that India's posture is driven by a short/long-term and cost-benefit analysis. Such time-sensitive and regime-centric assessments reflect:

- A principled preference for liberal and pluralist democracies, which are seen to be particularly favorable in the long-term as a) more inclined to cooperate with India given the inter-democratic bond (*dispensation*), b) more capable of providing sustainable domestic cohesion, stability and conflict resolution (*order*), and c) less prone to extra-regional balancing, especially with illiberal states (*geopolitics*);
- A moral rejection of illiberal (especially autocratic) regimes as being unsustainable in the long-term, but a converse recognition that they can be both necessary and desirable in the short-term to a) accelerate decision-making capacity, reliability

and celerity (*dispensation*), b) increase state cohesion and stability through force

(*order*), and c) offer external security guarantees (*geopolitics*).

The cost-benefit analysis in Indian strategic assessments thus also reflects a dynamic understanding of regime trajectories and their transition: 1) In the short term, liberal regimes will traverse a risky infant phase of instability that can be detrimental to India, but then gradually increase their beneficial effects as they mature, in the long term; and 2) Conversely, in the short term, infant illiberal (and especially autocratic) regimes will often reinstitute order and state cohesion that immediately benefits India, but are then bound to gradually increase their detrimental impact on India, especially as they face growing internal dissent and instability, in the long term.

By recognizing the short- and long-term benefits of different regime types, India's strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement is thus persistently marked by a dilemma of whether to engage or coerce regimes. Specific circumstances and strategic assessments will determine the exact posture, but the historical period analyzed suggests that Indian policy-makers are increasingly recognizing the benefits of a long-term focus on liberal democracy.

2. Additional findings and trends

a) Continuity and consensus

The main conclusion relates to the extraordinary historical continuity of the assessments that determine India's posture during each regime crisis. An excessive focus on principled speeches or the benefit of hindsight tends to encourage an evolutionary account of Indian

foreign policy, for example from "idealist" J. Nehru to more "realist" leaders after the end of the Cold War. In practice however, as demonstrated in the nine case studies examined across more than half a century, from the 1950s to the 2000s (with different leaders, governing parties and structural contexts), the types of strategic assessments and objectives remain mostly unaltered. This does not mean that there is also an underlying dynamic of change, for example in terms of the relative salience of each assessment, and by learning from past experience (discussed below), but this should be seen as indicating a capacity of strategic adaptation, and not rift. Similarly, while there are occasional organizational differences (also discussed below), these are mostly on procedural issues. Continuity and consensus in India's strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement should thus be seen as indications of a perennial *raison d'État* defined, in this specific issue area, as the quest for survival and security relying on the capability to pursue influence, order and stability in the periphery.

b) Decision-making complexity and flexibility

The existence of an Indian strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement is also indicated by its patterned decision-making process, including a) cost-benefit and inter-temporal trade-offs, b) issue linkage, and c) flexible adaptation. This contradicts two popular accounts about India's foreign or neighborhood policy: first, that it lacks structured, continuous, and strategic decision-making processes, and second, that its occasional security focus is an archaic obsession inherited from the colonial *Raj*. India's specific crisis postures are accordingly described as "reactionary," allegedly reflecting either lethargy and chance, or a reflexive and tactical impulse to control. The nine case

368

studies examined, however, all indicate at least three examples of the strategic quality of India's decision-making in the region:

- *Cost-benefit and inter-temporal trade-offs:* Indian decision-makers weigh the expected advantages and disadvantages of each possible posture (from cooperation to engagement), based on the relative salience of each assessment and on India's short- and long-term interests. This requires trade-off decisions that, depending on different assessments and time horizons, lead to postures that are either more or less risk-averse.

  Examples: 1) Nepal 1960, where the expected external security benefits of engaging the royalist regime outweighed the benefits of coercion and supporting the ousted democratic forces; 2) Burma 1988, where the risks of a failed democratization outweighed the limited benefits of continued engagement with a non-cooperative military regime; 3) Sri Lanka 2009, where the costs of coercion and further expansion of Chinese interests outweighed the risks that Sri Lanka would not deliver on a post-war conflict resolution mechanism).

- *Issue linkage:* the three ideal-type assessments (*dispensation*, *order* and *geopolitics*) are a simplified version of a more complex decision-making process that forces Indian officials to link various issues in order to determine the most beneficial posture. For example, Indian officials often oppose involvement of an extra-regional power in a neighboring country's conflict based on the understanding that this would affect the local balance of power, order and stability and, in turn, have negative cross-border repercussions on Indian domestic security.

Examples: 1) Burma 1962, where the democratic governments' domestic isolation was assessed to drive its geostrategic rapprochement with China to expand its counter-insurgency capabilities and expand electoral support; 2) Sri Lanka 1987, where President J. R. Jayewardene's non-cooperation confirmed Indian assessments that the ethnic conflict on the island was caused by deeply-rooted discriminatory state structures, and its solution thus warranted regime change; 3) Nepal 2006, where King Gyanendra's a military approach, while keeping the democratic process in suspension, was seen as increasing the incentives for the political parties to join hands with the Maoist insurgents to change the regime and end the conflict.

- *Flexible adaptation:* decision-making processes also indicate strategic ability when Indian officials adapt their assessments and objectives to new circumstances. Such flexibility is often misconceived as policy "incoherence" or "contradiction," when, in fact, it reflects decision-makers' aptitude to recognize new conditions, update assessments, and accordingly adjust India's posture.

Examples: 1) Ceylon 1956, Nepal 1960 and Burma 1962, where India's initial threat assessments about the USA/West are gradually replaced by a new focus on China after relations deteriorate with Beijing in the late 1950s; 2) Nepal 2006, where a changed domestic balance of power and reassurances from the "terrorist" Maoist leadership led India to engage them; 3) Myanmar 2007and Sri Lanka 2009, where attempts to deny Chinese presence were seen to be ineffectual or counterproductive, thus prompting counterbalancing efforts through engagement and a necessary divergence with the United States.

c) Change by learning from experience

While the broad patterns of assessments and objectives remain unaltered across time, there are indications that Indian officials have learned from experience, influenced by the success or failure of past crises postures. This is more significant than the strategic flexibility they demonstrate during specific crises because it reflects memory transmission and indicates that they possess strategic faculty to draw historical lessons for current crisis.

India's calibrated postures in the 2000s, for example, suggest that decision-makers have absorbed two converse lessons from the past: that a short-term focus on engagement with illiberal regimes (dominant in the 1950s-60s) may have unexpected long-term costs, in terms of their degenerating capacity to provide order and deliver to Indian security interests; and, on the other hand, that the temptations of a coercive strategy to support liberal regime changes (dominant in the 1980s) may occult unexpected risks and costs through over-involvement and micromanagement.

The negative outcome of India's military intervention in Sri Lanka (1987-1990) seems to have had a particularly traumatic effect, reducing India's incentives to pursue similar strategies of coercive involvement during the 2000s. Similarly, the failed transition in Burma (1988) and the subsequent costs of India's coercive posture there, reinforced New Delhi's posture of firm engagement towards Myanmar's military regime in 2007. On the other hand, the relative success of Nepal's regime change in 1990 emboldened India to draw positive lessons that underlined the benefits of coercion, thus incentivizing even greater involvement during the subsequent crisis there, in 2005-06.

<u>d) Ideological differences are overrated</u>

Despite vocal attempts to emphasize their differences, especially when in the opposition, Indian political parties have hardly affected Indian foreign policy in the neighborhood. The case studies in the 1980s and in the 2000s reflect policy continuity despite changes in government. In 1990, replying to a question on why he was not implementing the radical diplomatic reorientation he had promised during the electoral campaign, V. P. Singh, the second non-INC Prime Minister in more than forty years, thus noted that "foreign policy is not a bush shirt that you change every day [because] the geopolitical factors [will] continue to dominate."[967]

Similarly, in the 2000s, the continuity in policies towards Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar disprove political narratives about stark differences between the (center-right) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in power until 2004, and the (center-left) Indian National Congress (INC), in power after 2004. As highlighted in the case studies of Chapter 4, it was therefore under the allegedly "nationalist" BJP-led government that India began to normalize relations with the Nepalese Maoist insurgents, and under the allegedly "liberal" INC-led government that India extended crucial military and intelligence support for Sri Lanka to defeat the Tamil insurgency.

Rather than blunt or pervasive, the few *significant* ideological differences between political parties are thus often on mere procedural issues, e.g. on *how* best to achieve consensual objectives. Both the INC and BJP have their respective moralist wings, which are readily activated whenever political circumstances require it, especially when in parliamentary opposition; but such drama rarely influences the practice behind the scenes.

---

[967] Quoted in Inder K. Gujral, *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Hay House, 2011), 249.

<u>e) Organizational cultures</u>

India's crisis response and involvement in the neighborhood is occasionally influenced (but never determined) by different organizational cultures in the state apparatus. While the case studies examined indicate occasional clashes, decision-making power is almost exclusively concentrated in the Prime Minister and his office, especially after the post for National Security Adviser was created in 1998.

While more specific study is required on their specific cultures of regional involvement, the case studies suggest that there are significant differences between the diplomatic, military and internal and external intelligence cadres. The intensity of India's involvement, and the consequent chances of its success, will therefore tend to increase when the approaches of these four organizations align.

- *The Ministry of External Affairs:* India's Foreign Service tends to adopt the most liberal posture, most clearly identifying regime liberalization in neighboring countries as being in India's interest. This leads to an interesting paradox: Indian diplomats are frequently accused of being enamored with Nehru's exceptionalism, and "idealist" principles of non-interference, and of thus being unable or uncomfortable with the exigencies of power. In practice, however, as demonstrated in the cases of Nepal and Sri Lanka, Foreign Service officers have developed the most sophisticated instruments of involvement in the neighborhood, and have generally played the leading role in facilitating or even coercing regime changes. In their assessments, Indian diplomats will tend to err on the side of *over*-involvement to support regime liberalization, minority rights, or

pro-democracy forces across the region and, conversely, underrate the short-term benefits of illiberal rule by autocratic forces.

- *The Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Army:* In stark contrast to the diplomats, India's domestic intelligence and its Army officials tend to adopt the most illiberal posture, and are the least concerned about the effects of regime type. This is not surprising, given their focus on combating insurgencies and other cross-border security threats, which requires immediate order and stability in the neighboring country. The IB and Army's consequent conservative and introvert orientation therefore emphasizes the short-term benefits of autocratic rule in the periphery on Indian domestic security. In this view, India's default posture should be to engage any prevailing regime that can deliver most swiftly and efficiently on improving the neighboring country's state cohesion, stability and order.

- *c) The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW):* the approach of India's external intelligence organization is situated between that of the diplomats and the IB/Army officials. The RAW's strategic and extrovert outlook on external security, which is seen to depend on Indian capacity to influence neighboring counties internal affairs, suggests an extraordinary continuity of the *Raj*'s strategic legacy. RAW officers thus tend to see Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar through the prism of great power politics and geopolitical balancing, seeking to deny or deter any extra-regional influence. At times, this will lead to assessments privileging engagement of autocracies, siding with the IB and Army (the case of Burma, in 1988). In other contexts, however, for example Nepal in the 2000s, RAW officials will align with the liberal and interventionist approach of the diplomats, as they recognize that a pluralist and democratic regime in

374

Kathmandu will lead to greater Indian leverage. Other cases not studied in this dissertation (for example Bangladesh, Sikkim, and the Maldives) further suggest that RAW's position often weds the liberal, political and extrovert proclivity of diplomats with the illiberal, security-oriented and introvert proclivity of intelligence and military officials.

f) Linkages between economic interdependence and political liberalization

After India liberalized its economy in the 1990s, its officials started to identify regional economic cooperation as a key security interest for their country. J. Prasad, who served as ambassador to Nepal, thus underlined that "increasing sub-regional and regional cooperation and integration, entailing interweaving positive interactions and interdependence, will increase trust, reduce tensions, augment India's leverage vis-à-vis the great powers, and stabilize the region by raising the costs of non-cooperative behaviour." [968] Despite this recognition, South Asia continues to be affected by abnormally low levels of intra-regional trade and multilateral cooperation.[969]

But does political liberalization in neighboring states increase economic interdependence with India? And vice-verse, does growing economic interdependence with India drive political liberalization in neighboring countries? The case studies examined in this dissertation during the late 1980s, particularly on Nepal and Burma, indicate that Indian

[968] Prasad, "India's neighbours." Similarly, Foreign Secretary S. Saran, in 2005: "We must give our neighbours a stake in our own economic prosperity. This would impart a certain stability in our relations," Bhasin, *IFR 2005*, 675. For an earlier view, in 1989, diplomat J. Mehta noted that "the interdependence between India and Nepal is permanent … geography can be optimized, but not altered." Mehta, *Rescuing*, 237.

[969] E.g. in just 15 years, 1991-2006, the percentage share of intra-regional trade in total trade of South Asian countries rose from just 3.1 to 4.7%. Compiled from Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?*, 107.

officials trace such a causal link between political and economic liberalization.[970] This link between economic and political regimes deserves further study, especially given that it is a widely held assumption in liberal theories of regional integration and inter-democratic peace.

3. Contribution and further research avenues

The introduction to this dissertation set out the various disciplinary schools and debates in International Relations Theory to which this study seeks to contribute. While adopting the approach of strategic culture, the case studies debunked the narratives and literature on India's alleged strategic incapacity and idealist "deficiencies," and instead unearthed an Indian strategic culture of regional crisis response and involvement.

The three strategic assessments identified in the case studies (*dispensation*, *order* and *geopolitics*) denote a pragmatic priority to pursue the foundational security interests of the Indian state in the region. This trumps popular narratives about India's behavior being driven by ideals such as non-interference, reputation or an impulsive ideological preference for democratic regimes.

If by strategy one means allocating limited resources to take and implement decisions in pursuit of specific objectives, based on a pragmatic assessment of the context as its is (and not as one wish it was), Indian policymakers denote a rather high strategic ability. While looking back to emphasize India's resilience in surviving in a hostile region "as a democracy subjected to contradictory pulls and pressures of a pluralistic society

---

[970] For a similar argument, see Srinath Raghavan, "Regional integration: from pipe dream to possibility," *Seminar* 629, no. January (2012).

characterized by enormous diversities," former Foreign Secretary J. N. Dixit thus refers to India's foreign policy since 1947 as a "remarkable achievement, far beyond even what Europeans have achieved."[971]

This may not always be apparent in public, because policymakers tend to veil their strategic assessments and actions, in order not to clash with the popular narratives about India's idealism and exceptionalism (as discussed in detail in Chapter 1). In practice, however, the nine case studies demonstrate that India has not refrained from adopting every possible posture, from inaction to military intervention, and from engagement to coercion, in pursuit of its fundamental internal and external security interests.

This Indian strategic culture of crisis response and involvement can thus be characterized as a manifestation of *realpolitik* at its best, seeking to preserve and maximize democratic India's security in the region. The "Indian way" of foreign policy is an expression of a distinct Indian realism, which is based on the particular colonial history, democratic identity, limited capability, and geographic location of its state.

Reflecting such pragmatism, diplomat K. S. Bajpai recalls his father G. S. Bajpai's approach to international relations while serving the colonial Raj, and which also cogently defines independent India's realist regional policy since 1947:

> *We should never make the mistake of assuming that the righteousness of a cause can even eventually ensure its success. We live in a world of power. Power exercised without regard to morality is a crime against humanity; but morality cannot prevail without the backing of power.[972]*

---

[971] Dixit, *Neighbours*, 48-9.

[972] Bajpai, "Engaging," 85.

While this moral, liberal or democratic realism has always guided Indian strategic practice, the public narratives, scholarship and official rhetoric have instead emphasized an allegedly Indian idealism and exceptionalism, as laid out in Chapter 1.

Over recent years, however, with the accelerating historiographical turn in India's foreign policy, security and strategic studies, a rising number of voices have expressed the need to recover and publicize this realist tradition.[973] Former National Security Adviser S. S. Menon, for example, referred to one of India's foremost strategic thinkers, K. Subrahmanyam, as having been driven by a distinctively Indian "realism plus" school, which "combined a strong commitment to the basic values of the Indian Republic (of secularism, democracy and pluralism) with his realist pursuit of national interest."[974] Strategic analyst Dhruva Jaishankar, in turn, cautioned that "Indian realism may not adhere exactly to the theories of Carr, Morgenthau or Waltz," but that "this does not mean that a framework for how the Indian polity views its place in the world is completely absent."[975]

Similarly, in his work on India's strategic practice in the 1950s, scholar S. Raghavan refers to Nehru as a "liberal realist" and stresses that scholarship plays an important revisionist function to correct exceptionalist foreign policy narratives, as well as to expose contemporary policymakers to the lessons, tools and concepts of the past:

---

[973] The Takshashila Foundation, based in Bangalore under the leadership of Nitin Pai, has played a particularly important role in this regard. Their publication, *Pragati – The Indian National Interest Review*, has collected several contributions, since 2007, to encourage a realist reading of Indian foreign and security policies among younger Indians: http://pragati.nationalinterest.in/.

[974] He therefore saw "no real contradiction between the promotion of democracy and the pursuit of India's interests in our neighbourhood." Menon, "K. Subrahmanyam and India's Strategic Culture," 25.

[975] Dhruva Jaishankar, "A uniquely Indian Realism," *Pragati*, no. 38 (2010): 8.

At a time when India was weaker and poorer, Nehru realized that preserving India's interests and fulfilling its international ambitions would require a dexterous amalgam of material and ideational resources. As a rising India navigates its way through a fraught world order, it would be an irony and a pity if it neglects his fundamental insight.[976]

Does this mean that India merely needs to stay course and hope for the best? Has its realist strategic culture always succeeded in the region? It certainly has not, in the same measure that no other realist foreign policy has *always* succeeded. Such rationalist assumptions of optimality and perfection are fallacious. Instead, one should ask: can it improve?

On the one hand, it certainly can. For example, India can improve its capabilities to assess and intervene in regional crises. It can also improve decision-making processes, inter-organizational coordination, and its capacity to deliver on regional connectivity and crucial economic investments in neighboring countries. These and many other concrete future challenges for India's regional strategy are laid out in the following section.

On the other hand, however, there are also limits to what can be achieved through improvement. Unlike the natural sciences, politics, diplomacy and strategy have an inextricable element of chance and contingency – Clausewitz's famous "fog of war." To expect an "optimal" Indian neighborhood policy is, therefore, impossible and this is particularly apparent in terms of its capacity of involvement. Whenever acting beyond borders, India will keep trying, improving and failing in its chimerical quest to get all its regional ducks in a row. As this dissertation emphasizes, the fact that Indian decision-makers are deeply conscious of their own limits and recognize the Sisyphean nature of this game is, in itself, the best example of their pragmatic and realist outlook.

---

[976] Raghavan, *War and Peace*, 320-21.

This dissertation thus also contributes to the growing body of research that is shedding more light on this Indian realist way, and in particular on how its foreign policy reflects its liberal and democratic identity. Three possible avenues to build on this include: 1) Expand and test the dissertation's framework with more regional crises, for example in the Maldives, Bangladesh, or Afghanistan; 2) Apply the dissertation's framework on the strategic practice/rhetoric gap to other issue areas, and thus further question the alleged idealist nature of Indian foreign and security policies; and 3) Compare the Indian approach to that of its peers, most notably other democratic great powers, and thus mitigate righteous narratives about India's alleged exceptionalism.

4. Challenges for India's neighborhood policy and regional strategy

For many decades, India's strategic debate about the neighborhood was marked by defensiveness and a deep lack in self-confidence. Writing in the 1980s, for example, even the otherwise hawkish strategist K. Subrahmanyam reflected this inferiority complex while lamenting that "white nations (USA and USSR) and a yellow nation (China) being great powers can be accepted [by India's neighbours] but not one of themselves – the brown India."[977]

Today, a quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War, with many in the United States and the liberal West celebrating India as a "rising power" in a multilateral order, a "natural ally" to contain China, or a "beacon of hope" for democracy in Asia, the principal challenge for India is the exact obverse.[978] India will now have to tame its

---

[977] Subrahmanyam, "Neighbourhood," 125-6.
[978] See, for example, Blackwill, "Why is India America's Natural Ally?."

increasingly inflated self-confidence and reject the temptation to revel in adulation, which is bound to lead to perilous complacency. Instead, India will have to explore a narrow window of opportunity to maximize and leverage its new capabilities.

Such a strategic re-evaluation is particularly important in its immediate neighborhood, as argued in this dissertation. On the role of liberal democracy in its foreign policy, D. Jaishankar thus notes that India "has so far been limited to a considerable degree by resources and power projection capabilities in promoting these values more aggressively," suggesting that this will change as both the country's clout and demand to operate beyond borders increase.[979] Based on the findings of this dissertation, the following eighteen concrete challenges seek to contribute to the ongoing strategic exercise on how India can make more efficient use of its new capabilities in the region. In many ways, these are policy challenges that India has successfully dealt with in the past, but which will require even greater strategic acumen in future.

1. "Neighborhood first," always and forever: Every incoming Indian government ritualistically classifies the region as its first priority, but will then gradually shift its attention to farther horizons. India must resist the temptation to overrate the importance of distant Brazil, Canada, France, Nigeria, or Australia, and instead – as PM Nehru constantly beckoned his diplomats – "look at the map" to remind itself of its geographical location.[980] Foreign Secretary S. Saran thus emphasized that "in defining one's vital national and security interests, a country's neighbourhood enjoys a place of unquestioned primacy." [981] Proximity and cultural similarities can, however, be deceptive, as

---

[979] Jaishankar, "A uniquely Indian Realism," 4.

[980] Quoted in Bajpai, "Engaging," 81.

[981] Avtar S. Bhasin, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2005* (New Delhi: Geetika, 2005), 331.

neighboring countries' complex internal dynamics often require far more time, resources and expertise than expected. To combat complacency, the Indian government will have to expand its investment in diplomatic, military and intelligence resources that are specifically trained to deal with, and be deployed to the neighboring countries, from the Maldives to Myanmar. By promoting scholarly research on declassified materials and by tapping into the experienced pool of retired officials, such preparation should expose trainees to their country's rich albeit neglected history of strategic practice in the region.

2. From "right of first refusal" to "capacity of first delivery:" As the geostrategic context changes with the rise of China, India can no longer afford to persist on its archaic "right of first refusal" when neighbors seek weapons, investments or any other assistance from beyond the region.[982] This remains as one of the most pernicious irritants in bilateral relations, as neighbors often prefer India as a supplier, but are chagrined by its chronic delays.[983] From such a negative approach, New Delhi will have to proactively focus on ensuring a "capacity of first delivery." As neighbors face increasing alternatives and choice, they are exploring the competitive "first-come, first-served" principle, which requires India to explore opportunities with greater celerity and to provide high-quality products and services, whether military platforms or infrastructure projects.

3. Privilege connectivity over security: For almost half a century, India's geostrategic insulation transformed its borders into barriers against foreign influence. Despite economic reforms since 1990, defensive security concerns continue to hold up these walls,

---

[982] As noted by former diplomat U. S. Bajpai, India's ambition "to be recognised and certified as the prime power in the region … is legitimate, but it has to be earned," in U. S. Bajpai, ed. *India and its Neighbourhood* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1986), 11.

[983] E.g. Army Chief, Gen. V. K. Singh, while visiting Myanmar, in the late 2000s: "No wonder that none of our neighbours trust us. If we are so stymied by the 'system' [incapable of delivering], then why bother to make the offer in the first place? … We should be building bridges, but here we are constantly shooting ourselves in the foot," Singh, *Courage*, 278.

hindering cross-border connectivity, cooperation, and integration with the neighbors. To paraphrase King Mahendra's adage of the 1960s on Indian concerns about Nepal's first road link to China, "Communism won't arrive in a taxi;" nor will today's spies or terrorists require a high-speed train to infiltrate from Bangladesh or Myanmar.[984] Roads and railways go both ways across borders and should therefore no longer be seen as a threat, but instead leveraged as a link to export people, goods and services, and thus increase Indian influence in the periphery. As Foreign Secretary S. Saran presciently noted, in 2006, this requires a "mindset change" because "India must start looking at national boundaries not as impenetrable walls which somehow protect us from the outside world, but as 'connectors', bringing India closer to its neighbours."[985]

4. Inter-organizational cooperation and coordination: India's foreign policy-making is becoming more complex, involving a rising number of governmental organizations besides the Ministry of External Affairs.[986] This poses particular challenges in the neighborhood, where political, diplomatic, intelligence and military structures have access to different sources and frequently pursue parallel policies, which delays implementation, sends mixed signals, and strains bilateral relations.[987] Encouraging officials to be cross-posted and circulate among different organizations will increase their exposure, streamline efforts, and increase synergies. The Indian Armed Forces, and its Army in particular, offer an extraordinary untapped potential of military-to-military resources,

---

[984] Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 147.

[985] "Another mindset change, linked to the one mentioned above is to stop looking at our border areas as being on the periphery or serving as 'buffer zones' preventing ingress into the heartland. We must rid ourselves of this "outpost" mentality" [and border regions must] become the bridges linking countries," Bhasin, *IFR 2006*, 673-4.

[986] Tanvi Madan, "Officialdom: South Block and Beyond," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[987] Indian intelligence, military, customs and other administrative officials posted on the Indian side of the border are thus often better informed than diplomats at the Indian missions in the neighbouring country.

expertise and contacts on the neighbors that must be leveraged into a more proactive defence diplomacy.[988]

5. Diplomacy's didactic domestic mission: Indian public awareness of the neighboring countries oscillates between default oblivion and spurts of hysteria.[989] The public debate consequently swings between the extreme narratives of "bully" or "benign" India. As political parties, civil society and lobbies play an increasing influence on foreign policy-making, the internal outreach capacity of public diplomacy will be key to educate civil society about how India's domestic development often depends on the capacity of its foreign policy to shape events in neighboring countries. This pedagogical mission must shed exceptionalist myths about India's regional policy being driven by sovereign equality, non-interference, or altruism and, instead, raise popular comfort levels with the crude concept of coercive power and the link between security and democracy.

6. Regional states from spoilers to stakeholders: India's regional states and their political parties have in recent years attained an unprecedented influence, and even veto-power on foreign policy towards neighboring state, especially in the cases of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. As scholar A. Appadorai presciently noted in 1981, while inevitable in a federal structure, such tensions can be mitigated by "systematic procedures for consultations with state governments before decisions on foreign affairs are taken."[990]

---

[988] On the "compartmentalization of the military and civilian establishments," see J. N. Dixit, *Role of the armed forces in the formulation of India's foreign policy* (New Delhi: United Service Institution of India, 2002).

[989] As described by a former Indian diplomat: "India's neighbors have perfected the art of extracting concessions from New Delhi. Mass hysteria is created. The media is pressed into service to whip up the anti-Indian feeling. This is enough to scare New Delhi. The public opinion in India takes it as a proof of the failure of its neighbourhood policy. (…) Long-term perspective becomes the casualty,"Bhasin, *Nepal-India v.1*, li.

[990] Appadorai, *The domestic roots of India's foreign policy, 1947-1972*, 209-10. Nitin Pai has also called for a "Subcontinental Relations Council" with the Indian Prime Minister and Chief Ministers from border states:

Given the political nature of these consultations, negotiations should be driven by high-level cabinet members, with the assistance of expert diplomats. The key objective will be to rope in regional state governments and parties as stakeholders that are invested in rising cross-border cooperation and interdependency. This will, in turn, contribute to insulate bilateral relations from political change in governments.

7. Take the long view: Technical and other minor disputes frequently bog down India's relations with its neighbors. As regional economic cooperation and interdependence become paramount, India's strategic objectives will require more tactical steps backwards, or "making short-term sacrifices for long-term goals." [991] This entails a continued emphasis on providing non-reciprocal, unilateral, and preferential benefits to the neighbors, thus raising their trust and tying them to India in the long run, even if that hurts domestic constituencies in the short run.[992] Commonly known as the "Gujral doctrine," this approach is often portrayed as reflecting India's altruism and generosity when, in fact, it is a farsighted expression of realism. Recalling "the logic behind" the doctrine he announced in 1996, former External Affairs Minister I. K. Gujral thus recalled that "we had to be at 'total peace' with all other immediate neighbours in order to contain Pakistan's and China's influence in the region."[993]

8. Improve signaling and draw red lines: Ambiguous communication is the principal cause for bilateral crises between India and its neighbors. For example, India will often assume that the Nepalese government is deliberately acting against its advice when, in

---

"States are stakeholders, not spoilsports," *Business Standard*, Aug. 18, 2013: http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/states-are-stakeholders-not-spoilsports-113081800638_1.html

[991] Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy*, xx.

[992] Even while not forgetting that "big countries also have interests, with limits to what they can concede," Bajpai, "Engaging," 86.

[993] Gujral, *Matters*, 406.

fact, New Delhi never expressed concerns in the first place, or did not articulate them forcefully enough. K. Subrahmanyam thus noted that "it must be made clear to our neighbors what kind of concessions they can legitimately expect from their big neighbor and what they cannot."[994] Similarly, former Foreign Secretary M. Dubey emphasized the importance of drawing explicit red lines: "Safeguarding basic interests [means we will have to] set out some of the *Lakshman Rekhas* (absolute limits) which India would not expect its neighbours to cross".[995] Beyond diplomatic signaling, clear and categorical messages will also tend to be received with greater respect when privately conveyed by high-level, political and personal representatives of the Indian Prime Minister.

9. Grow a thick skin: While it may hurt its popular sense of exceptionalism, India's hegemonic role, colossal size and geopolitical centrality will perpetually attract animosity, resentment and resistance from its peripheral states.[996] Whatever India does, the cultural, economic and geopolitical expressions of "anti-Indianism" will therefore continue to thrive across the region. Former National Security Adviser M. K. Narayanan thus cautions that even "while [India] doesn't exercise its big brother approach, our neighbors often approach us like that, by standing up and telling their own people 'I'm not subservient to India]'."[997] While most of this competitive nationalism is ineffective, a thick skin is required to persistently ignore such provocations and stay on track. Beckoning India not to be distracted, and to preserve its diplomacy's dogged quality, K.

---

[994] K. Subrahmanyam (1981) Subcontinental Security, Strategic Analysis, 253

[995] Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy*, xx.

[996] One of India's senior-most diplomats thus observes that "it is not easy to be by far the largest state in any region: one inherently arouses fear, resentments, extreme touchiness among adjacent peoples" Bajpai, "Engaging," 86.

[997] Interview 077.

Subrahmanyam thus stressed that "an elephant trying to behave like a rabbit or a deer will not get accepted as such."[998]

A thick skin should not, however, lead to autism or arrogance in bilateral relations. The following three challenges illustrate this.

<u>10. Manners matter – protocol and public diplomacy:</u> Neighboring country officials commonly characterize their Indian counterparts' posture as condescending, patronizing and arrogant. This is known as the "big brother approach," or according to Sri Lankan diplomat S. Jayaweera, the "Cassius Clay attitude" of India, "regarding herself as the greatest."[999] Former external affairs minister K. N. Singh thus cautioned India to be "extra careful" in its relations with small neighbours: "their political egos and sensitivities must be born in mind all the time."[1000] This can be facilitated by: 1) a protocolar "sensitivity to psychological factors," for example by treating and hosting neighbors with full honors, at pair with those conceded to great powers;[1001] 2) avoiding emphasis on cultural commonalities with India and, instead, recognize differences and respect the neighbor's distinct identity; 3) abstaining from references to any form of Indian exceptionalism, which is bound to be interpreted as an expression of superiority; and 4)

---

[998] Subrahmanyam, "Subcontinental Security," 261.

[999] Quoted in Shelton U. Kodikara, ed. *Dilemmas of Indo-Sri Lankan relations* (Colombo: Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, 1991), 53. Nehru would refer to India as the older or brig brother to neighbouring countries but with the opposite objective to fend off domestic pressure to intervene in their domestic affairs. See e.g his 1952, May 1 speech: "We have always considered Ceylon as our younger brother (…). So with a younger brother no compulsion should be used." Bhasin, *India-Sri Lanka v.2*, 599.

[1000] Singh, *Walking*, 120.

[1001] Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy*, xx.

leveraging public diplomacy to cultivate and win over traditionally "anti-India" constituencies in neighboring countries, instead of ignoring or undermining them.[1002]

11. Keep looking into the mirror: However exceptional in its capacity to ensure territorial integrity and development through a pluralist, liberal and democratic political system, India should never underestimate the extent to which crises in neighboring countries may also originate on its own side of the border. Whether intentionally or not, Indian domestic policies and regional politics have thus often contributed to crisis escalation across the border, further destabilizing the neighbor, for example in Sri Lanka, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A continuously self-critical and introspective perspective will facilitate bilateral relations, and can be fostered by thought exercises that encourage Indian officials to put themselves into the shoes of their counterparts in Kathmandu, Colombo or Dhaka.

12. Avoid inaction, assume the initiative: No scenario is more harmful to Indian relations with its neighbors than stagnation. Inertia hinders the timely identification and solution of problems and it also raises incentives for neighbors to adopt a balancing strategy, for example via China, to regain Indian attention. Paradoxically, even periods of crisis and conflict are thus more productive, as they demand New Delhi's focus and can pave the way for a significant improvement in relations. To combat torpor, the Indian government must constantly strive to be the first-mover, pressing on to expand bilateral dialogue and cooperation. Unlike at the global level, in South Asia the onus of initiative will always rest on New Delhi's shoulders, however heavy or uncomfortable.

[1002] This includes, for example, the Sinhala nationalists in Sri Lanka (particularly the JVP) and the Leftist parties in Nepal (particularly the CPN-UML and CPN-M).

13. To engage, or not to engage? As this dissertation demonstrates, there is no ready-made solution to the question whether New Delhi should engage a neighboring country's regime or support its change. This issue thus poses the most difficult challenge, and often assumes the form of a decision-making dilemma: 1) a shortsighted focus on engagement and quick-fix solutions earns immediate dividends but may prove unsustainable and costly in the long-term to Indian interests; and 2) a farsighted option for coercion may promise long-term dividends but, if not successful, risks a total breakdown in bilateral relations. Furthermore, while India's posture depends on cost-benefit and short/long-term assessments, these must be constantly updated, or else a lag can rapidly emerge. Historian A. G. Noorani consequently refers to the danger of India overcompensating or persisting with an outdated policy, for example by "sinning without pleasure" (engaging an autocracy without benefits), of which the opposite would be "virtuosity with pain" (engaging a democracy despite hurting its interests).[1003] Scenario-based and prospective policy studies on the neighborhood can assist in keeping Indian cost-benefit assessments up to speed in face of changing circumstances.[1004]

14. Don't neglect, nor overreact to Chinese influence: China's rising influence across South Asia often leads to a challenging paradox between two extreme responses that must be avoided at all cost, for example in regard to Nepal: 1) Incentives to counter Chinese influence *increase* whenever Nepal undergoes a regime crisis, often leading New Delhi to overreact precisely when its interests most closely align with those of Beijing and should

---

[1003] Noorani only refers to the first expression, adapted from Hindustani (*gunah be lazzat*): "Very Unrealpolitik," *The Hindustan Times*, Oct. 23, 2007: http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/very-unrealpolitik/story-M5bsmOAPKeWhwCPtiQQQ1H.html. A Sanskrit-based interpretation of the second expression could be to insist in *punya* despite *dukkha*.

[1004] For example: Rumel Dahiya and Behuria K Ashok, eds., *India's Neighbourhood: Challenges in the Next Two Decades* (New Delhi: Pentagon 2012).

therefore lead to restraint; 2) Conversely, incentives to counter Chinese influence *decrease* during periods of "normalcy" in Nepal, often leading New Delhi to lose focus and neglect the insidiousness of Beijing's incremental influence in the neighboring state.

As K. Subrahmanyam emphasized, while it is natural that the "Indian attitude will harden" at the immediate prospect of rising Chinese influence, New Delhi must take a long-term and "relaxed view," because: a) External powers will escalate very rarely during crises, only when "the costs of annoying India are outweighed by the benefits [of] providing countervailing power and influence;" and b) "In the longer run the imperatives of geography, cultural affinities, international politics … will bring home to our neighbors the facts of life and of realpolitik."[1005] Even in Nepal and in Sri Lanka, where China has had the most leverage to encroach on Indian influence, the historical record examined in this dissertation suggests that Beijing remains largely deferential to New Delhi, particularly during crises.[1006] While this should temper future overreaction, it should not, however, lead to complacency.

15. Playing the global game in the region: India's regional primacy will increasingly hinge on its dexterity to play the extra-regional balancing game. It can no longer afford the policy of denying access, nor the myth that it can work alone to keep the region to itself. In the 1970s, this meant aligning with the Soviet Union to countervail Chinese and

---

[1005] Subrahmanyam, "Neighbourhood," 136-7. For a similar argument, see Vinod C Khanna, "Stability through cooperation," *Seminar* 584, no. April (2008).

[1006] Chapters 2, 3 and 4 detail such guarded Chinese behaviour whenever Nepalese officials approached them for support to countervail Indian influence during times of bilateral crisis. For example, during Nepalese PM Prachanda's 2008 visit there, he was reportedly told off with resource to a typical aphorism: "please remember that there are two sides to a mountain, and you should always know on which side you are on," (Interview 056). Similarly, when Sri Lanka tried to rope in Beijing to balance Indian pressure in the 1980s, a Sri Lankan diplomat recalls that the Chinese "framed their advice [to Sri Lanka] in a cautionary aphorism: 'distant waters don't help put out a fire on your doorstep.'" Gooneratne, *A Decade*, 126.

American influence in the region. Today, as the threat assessments concentrate on China, this will require an even more complex task of crafting flexible partnerships with the United States, the European Union, Japan and other powers to pool efforts, coordinate policies and cooperate in third countries across South Asia. However, even if only to diversify its options and to increase its bargaining power with such "like-minded" partners, New Delhi should also consider working with, and not exclusively against Beijing in its neighborhood, particularly in targeted sectors where Sino-Indian synergies can be maximized for mutual benefit.

16. Explore and widen the range of coercive instruments: As this dissertation sets out, India has a rich tradition of exploring a wide spectrum of modes of involvement in the neighborhood, from inaction to intervention. A trade blockade on Nepal may have been a tempting solution in the past, but may no longer be an appropriate response today – it rarely takes a sledgehammer to crack a nut. In order to make even more efficient use of this diplomatic armory during future crises, Indian decision-makers will have to a) seek to expand its range, adding on new instruments based on their country's increasing financial, diplomatic, intelligence, and military capabilities; and, even more importantly b) make more sophisticated use of such tools by adapting them to particular circumstances, and develop strategies of combination or sequencing. By exploring and adding on to this range of coercive tools, India will be able to target each problem with a commensurate response and also reduce the risk of escalation with its neighbors.

17. Avoid entanglement, invest in prevention: One of the greatest challenges in India's regional policy is to resist the temptation to micromanage the neighboring country's internal affairs unless it is critically necessary. The likelihood of such involvement

spiraling out of control and leading to disastrous effects, especially in terms of overextension and weakening institutions, are well known to India and were reinforced by the experience in Sri Lanka, in the 1980s. This should not, however, preclude India from investing in preventive support, and continue to expand its rising "democracy assistance" programs to neighboring countries struggling with infant liberal regimes and difficult transitions. This will require a significant investment in Indian institutions that can provide specialized training and technical expertise, and also a public diplomacy effort to rope in civil society, research organizations, and political parties to publicize the Indian democratic model abroad.

18. Prepare for the worst: While India may not wish to intervene again in the region, it cannot rule it out, and must therefore be prepared to do so. Given that India's internal security, political order and economic growth increasingly rely on the stability of its extended neighborhood, New Delhi will be forced to respond to a variety of contingencies in and beyond South Asia, including devastating humanitarian and political crises.[1007] This will require a renewed focus on the region, as well as on out-of-area operations in theaters that are more distant and hostile. As scholar S. D. Muni presciently pointed out in 1991, just one year after the Indian Armed Forces withdrew in defeat from Sri Lanka, New Delhi "needs to do a great deal of homework to prepare itself – in terms of doctrines, command structure, equipment, training and intelligence – before agreeing to undertake

---

[1007] Sunil Khilnani thus emphasizes that "India will be the default steward for such [natural or man-made] crises, and a likely destination for flows of refugees. Making assessments of human catastrophes, and judgments about interventions to alleviate them, will therefore remain an important responsibility for Indian policymakers," https://newrepublic.com/article/115435/gary-basss-blood-telegram-reviewed-sunil-khilnani. See also Bajpai, "The Global Commons and India's National Security Strategy " 54; Khilnani et al., *Non-Alignment 2.0*, 37.

[more] military adventures [abroad]."[1008] 25 years later, such efforts have to be urgently revived, accelerated, and expanded, based on continuously updated threat assessments and scenarios, and an expanding regional security environment.

[1008] Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 182-3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

<u>a) Archives</u>

National Archives of India, New Delhi

Files from Ministry of External Affairs (only files directly referenced in the dissertation):

NAI, MEA 1-4/55/55-BC(B), "Reports from the Military Attache, Embassy of India Rangoon, for 1955"

NAI, MEA 3-2/55-BC (B), "Meeting between the Political Officer, Tirap Frontier Division and the Deputy Commissioner, Mytkyina (Burma)"

NAI, MEA 26(2)-BC(B)/57, "Treaty of friendship between India and the Union of Burma"

NAI, MEA B/54/6421/4, "Manipuris and Lushais settled in Burma after Jan. 1948"

NAI, MEA B/54/3012/4, "Land Nationalisation in Burma − Question of distribution of land to Indians"

NAI, MEA B/54/1333/4-5, "Special reports from Burma & Ceylon on the evolution of their foreign policy"

NAI, MEA B/54/1821/4 "Zapu Phizo, President of the Naga National Council − crossing of border into Burma in Novr. 1954 − Enquiry reg."

NAI, MEA 48-2/55-BC, "Disabilities of people of Indian origin in Burma – Policy"

NAI B/54/1412/4, "KMT forces aggression into Burma. Burma's complaint to U.N.O."

NAI B/52/1335/4, "Burma – Hindu Muslim Relations on Burma"

NAI B/54/1411/4, "Indian ambassador in Burma – D.O. letters to the Commonwealth Secretary regarding affairs in Burma"

NAI 3(1)BC(B)/58, "Setting up of an inter-departmental working group for studying pending problems in Indo-Burmese relations" (1958)

NAI 3(12)-R&I/58, "Reports (other than annual) from Burma"

NAI 3(12)-R&I/59, "Reports (other than annual) from Rangoon (Burma)"

NAI 3(12)-R&I/61-I, "Annual report from Rangoon for 1960"

NAI 6(12)-R&I/61, "Reports (other than annual) from Rangoon (Burma)"

NAI HI/1012(12)/64-I, Political reports (other than annual) from Rangoon (Burma)"

NAI HI/1011(12)/65, "Annual reports from Rangoon for the year 1964"

NAI 3(12)-R&I/60, "Annual reports from Burma"

NAI 3(12)-HI/62, "Annual reports from Burma for 1961"

NAI HI/1011(45)/65, "Annual reports from Kathmandu for 1964"

NAI 3(45)-R&I/58, "Annual reports from Kathmandu for 1957"

NAI 6(27)-R&I/58, "Reports (other than Annual) from Nepal"

NAI 6(27)-R&I/59, "Reports (other than Annual) from Nepal"

NAI 6(27)-R&I/60, "Reports (other than annual) from Kathmandu (Nepal) for 1960"

NAI HI/1012(27)/63, "Political reports (other than annual) from Kathmandu)" for 1963

NAI HI/121(4)/66, "A background note on Ceylon's claim to Kachacha Tivu Island"

NAI 3(8)-R&I/57, "Annual reports on Ceylon (Colombo) for 1956"

b) Interviews

Only those directly referenced in the dissertation:

001: ABHYANKAR, Rajendra – Via telephone, Nov. 11, 2014.

002: ANANDASANGAREE, V. – Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka, Dec. 1, 2014.

004: BHATIA, Rajiv – New Delhi, India, Oct. 1, 2014.

005: CHANDRAHASAN, S. C. – Chennai, India, Nov. 21, 2014.

006: CHANDRASIRI, G. A. – Jaffna, Sri Lanka, Dec. 1, 2014.

007: THAPA, Pyar Jung – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 30, 2014.

008: PRASAD, Alok – New Delhi, India, Nov. 13, 2014.

009: MUKHERJEE, Shiv Shankar – New Delhi, India, Nov. 11, 2014.

010: MALINOWSKI, Michael – Washington DC, United States, July 14, 2015.

013: SAHDEV, Kuldip – New Delhi, India, Nov. 4, 2014.

014: HARIHARAN, S., – Chennai, India, Nov. 22, 2014.

016: PRAKASH, Arun – Vasco da Gama, India, Nov. 16, 2014.

017: WIN, Khin Maung – Yangon, Myanmar, Dec. 18, 2014.

020: Indian Foreign Service officer (Ambassador rank) – Via telephone, Oct. 9, 2014.

021: FERNANDO, Austin – Colombo, Sri Lanka, Dec. 3, 2014.

022: SHARMA, Shankar – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 28, 2014.

023: RAO, Nirupama – Via telephone, Nov. 13, 2014.

024: PANDEY, Ramesh N. – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 31, 2014.

025: SIKRI, Rajiv – New Delhi, India, Oct. 1, 2014.

026: RAE, Ranjit – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 30, 2014.

027: THAPA, Chiran S. – Kathmandu, Nepal, Nov. 3, 2014.

028: SARAN, Shyam – New Delhi, India, Nov. 8, 2014; and Washington DC, United States, July 14, 2015.

029: SINHA, Y. K. – Colombo, Sri Lanka, Nov. 25, 2014.

030: THEIN, U Kyi – Yangon, Myanmar, Dec. 18, 2014.

031: RAMACHANDRAN, Panruti – Chennai, India, Nov. 22, 2014.

032: SOOD, Vikram – New Delhi, India, Sept. 27, 2014; and Nov. 11, 2014.

034: GHAREKHAN, Chinmaya – New Delhi, India, Oct. 21, 2014.

035: KALKAT, A. S. – New Delhi, India, Oct. 10, 2014.

036: CHIDAMBARAM, P. – New Delhi, India, Nov. 13, 2014.

037: JAYATILLEKA, Dayan – Colombo, Sri Lanka, Dec. 4, 2014.

038: THAPA, Bekh Bahadur – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 31, 2014.

040: RASGOTRA, M. K. – New Delhi, India, Oct. 7, 2014

044: RAM, N. – Chennai, India, Nov. 20 and 21, 2014.

045: SINGH, J. J. – New Delhi, India, Nov. 6, 2015.

047: HEBLIKAR, Pratap – Bangalore, India, Nov. 19, 2014.

048: MUKHOPADHYA, Gautam – Yangon, Myanmar, Dec. 12, 2014.

049: THAPA, Bishwo B. – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 30, 2014.

050: RANA, Prabhakar – Kathmandu, Nepal, Oct. 31, 2014.

051: NU, Daw Mya Than Than – Yangon, Myanmar, Dec. 9 and 17, 2014.

054: NEPAL, Madhav Kumar – Kathmandu, Nepal, Nov. 1, 2014.

056: MUKHARJI, Deb – New Delhi, India, Oct. 13, 2014.

057: MYINT, Soe – Yangon, Dec. 15, 2014.

058: PRASAD, Jayant – New Delhi, India, Nov. 12, 2014.

059: MALIK, Ved P. – Gurgaon, India, Oct. 20, 2014.

060: LWIN, U Wynn – Yangon, Myanmar, Dec. 16 and 18, 2014.

061: DEO, Neelam – New Delhi, India, Sept. 25, 2014.

063: RODRIGO, Nihal – Colombo, Sri Lanka, Dec. 3, 2014.

064: GOONERATNE, John – Colombo, Sri Lanka, Nov. 26, 2014.

067: DESAI, Niranjan – Gurgaon, India, Oct. 20, 2014.

069: MEHROTRA, Lakhan L. – Gurgaon, India, Oct. 17, 2014.

070: GONSALVES, Eric – Noida, India, Oct. 14, 2014.

071: PERERA, Rohan − Colombo, Sri Lanka, Dec. 4, 2014.

072: MITRA, Kalyan K. − New Delhi, Nov. 9, 2014.

073: DHANAPALA, Jayantha − Colombo, Sri Lanka, Nov. 27, 2014.

074: MALIK, Preet M. S. − Gurgaon, India, Oct. 17, 2014.

075: SINGH, K. Natwar − New Delhi, India, Nov. 8, 2014.

076: Indian Foreign Service officer (retired) − New Delhi, India, Nov. 13, 2014.

077: NARAYANAN, M. K. − Chennai, India, Nov. 21, 2014.

078: MENON, Shivshankar − Washington DC, United States, July 15, 2015.

079: MEHTA, Sureesh − Panaji, India, Nov. 17, 2014.

080: PARTHASARATHY, G. − Noida, India, Oct. 14, 2014.

081: SEN, Ronen − Noida, India, and via telephone, Oct. 15 and 18, and Nov. 7, 2014.

082: Sri Lankan foreign service officer (retired) − Colombo, Sri Lanka, Nov. 28, 2014.

Secondary Sources

Abhyankar, Rajendra M. *Stuff Happens: An Anecdotal Insight into Indian Diplomacy*. New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2013.

Abraham, Itty. "From Bandung to Nam: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 46, no. 2 (2008): 195-219.

Abraham, Thomas. "The Emergence of the Ltte and the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Agreement of 1987." In *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons*

edited by Rupesinghe Kumar, 17-29. Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006.

Acharya, Amitav. *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: Asean and the Problem of Regional Order*. London: Routledge, 2014.

———. *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism*.   Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Acharya, Amitav, and Barry Buzan. "Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007): 287-312.

Adhikari, Aditya. *The Bullet and the Ballot Box: The Story of Nepal's Maoist Revolution*. New York: Verso, 2014.

Advani, L. K. *My Country My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2008.

Agnihotri, Shailendra K., and B. Datta-Ray, eds. *Perspective of Security and Development in North East India*. New Delhi: Concept, 2002.

Alagappa, Muthiah. "Strengthening International Studies in India: Vision and Recommendations." *International Studies* 46, no. 1-2 (2009): 7-35.

Anderson, Mike. "The Role of International Law in Defining the Protection of Refugees in India." *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 33, no. 1 (2015): 46-113.

Anderson, P. "Gandhi Centre Stage." *London Review of Books* 34, no. 13 (2012): 3.

Appadorai, A. *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy, 1947-1972*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Ashton, S. R. *British Policy Towards the Indian States, 1905-1939*. London: Curzon Press, 1982.

Ashworth, Lucian M. "Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations." *International Relations* 16, no. 1 (2002): 33-51.

Austin, Granville. *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

Ayoob, M. "India in South Asia: The Quest for Regional Predominance." *World Policy Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 107-33.

Bajpai, K. Shankar. "Engaging the World." In *Indian Foreign Policy: Challanges and Opportunities*, edited by Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta, 75-89. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007.

———. "The Evolution of the Indian Foreign Service Establishment." *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 1, no. 3 (2011): 104-17.

Bajpai, Kanti. "The Global Commons and India's National Security Strategy ". In *Grand Strategy for India 2020 and Beyond*, edited by V. Krishnappa and George Princy, 40-63. New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012.

———. "Strategic Culture." In *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, edited by Michael R Chambers, 245-304. Carlisle: US Army War College, 2002.

Bajpai, Kanti, Saira Basit, and V. Krishnappa, eds. *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory, Cases*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2014.

Bajpai, Kanti, and Siddharth Mallavarapu, eds. *International Relations in India: Theorising the Region and Nation*. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2005.

Bajpai, Kanti P, and Siddharth Mallavarapu, eds. *International Relations in India: Bringing Theory Back Home*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2005.

Bajpai, U. S., ed. *India and Its Neighbourhood*. New Delhi: Lancer, 1986.

Bandarage, Asoka. *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Bandaranaike, S. W. R. D. *Speeches and Writings*. Colombo: Department of Broadcasting and Information, 1963.

Bandyopadhyaya, J. *The Making of India's Foreign Policy: Determinants, Institutions, Processes, and Personalities*. 3rd ed. New Delhi: Allied, 2003 [1970].

Banerjee, D. "Myanmar and Indian Security Concerns." *Strategic Analysis* 19, no. 5 (1996): 691-706.

Baral, Lok Raj. "The Return of Party Politics in Nepal." *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (1994): 121-33.

Baru, Sanjaya. *The Accidental Prime Minister: The Making and Unmaking of Manmohan Singh*. Gurgaon: Penguin/Viking, 2014.

———. "The Influence of Business and Media on Indian Foreign Policy." *India Review* 8, no. 3 (2009/08/13 2009): 266-85.

Baylis, John, and Steve Smith. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Bayly, C. A. *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

———. *Recovering Liberties Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Behuria, Ashok K., Smruti S. Pattanaik, and Arvind Gupta. "Does India Have a Neighbourhood Policy?". *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 2 (2012): 229-46.

Bhagavan, M. *The Peacemakers*. New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012.

Bhagavan, Manu B. *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012.

Bhasin, Avtar S. *India-Sri Lanka Relations and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: Documents, 1947-2000 V.1*. New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001.

———. *India-Sri Lanka Relations and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: Documents, 1947-2000 V.2*. New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001.

———. *India-Sri Lanka Relations and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: Documents, 1947-2000 V.3*. New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001.

———. *India-Sri Lanka Relations and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: Documents, 1947-2000 V.4*. New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001.

———. *India-Sri Lanka Relations and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: Documents, 1947-2000 V.5*. New Delhi: Indian Research Press, 2001.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2003*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2004.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2004*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2005.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2005*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2005.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2005*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2006.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2006*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2007.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2007*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2008.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2008*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2009.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2009*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2010.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2010*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2011.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2011*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2012.

———, ed. *India's Foreign Relations - Documents 2012*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2013.

———. *Nepal-India, Nepal-China Relations: Documents, 1947-2005 V.1*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2005.

———. *Nepal-India, Nepal-China Relations: Documents, 1947-2005 V.3*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2005.

———. *Nepal-India, Nepal-China Relations: Documents, 1947-2005 V. 5*. New Delhi: Geetika, 2005.

Bhatia, Rajiv K. *India-Myanmar Relations: Changing Contours*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2016.

Bhaumik, Subir. "Guns, Drugs and Rebels." *Seminar*, no. 550 (June 2005).

———. *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's Northeast*. New Delhi: Sage, 2009.

Blackwill, Robert. "Why Is India America's Natural Ally?". *The National Interest* (2005).

Blank, Jonah, Jennifer Moroney, Angel Rabasa, and Bonny Lin. *Look East, Cross Black Waters: India's Interest in Southeast Asia*. Washington DC: Rand Corporation, 2015.

Bloomfield, Alan. *India and the Responsibility to Protect*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2016.

Blyth, Robert J. *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858-1947*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Booth, K. *Realism and World Politics*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011.

Bose, Sumantra. *States, Nations, Sovereignty: Sri Lanka, India, and the Tamil Eelam Movement*. New Delhi: Sage, 1994.

Breckenridge, Carol A, and Peter Van der Veer, eds. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Brewster, David. *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*. Routledge, 2014.

Brincat, Shannon, Laura Lima, and Joao Nunes, eds. *Critical Theory in International Relations and Security Studies*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Brodie, Bernard. *Morals and Strategy*. Santa Monica: Rand, 1964.

Brown, Judith M. *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Brown, T. Louise. *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal: A Political History*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Cady, John F. *A History of Modern Burma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958.

Carothers, T. "The Continuing Backlash against Democracy Promotion." *New Challenges to Democratization* (2010): 59-72.

Chacko, Priya. *Indian Foreign Policy: The Politics of Postcolonial Identity from 1947 to 2004*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Chadda, Maya. *Ethnicity, Security, and Separatism in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Chakravarti, Nalini R. *The Indian Minority in Burma: The Rise and Decline of an Immigrant Community*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Chandraprema, C. A. *Gota's War: The Crushing of Tamil Tiger Terrorism in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: n/a, 2012.

Chandrasekharan, S. "The Timphu Talks: An Opportunity Missed?". In *Sri Lankan Crisis and India's Response*, edited by V. Suryanarayan, 79-88. New Delhi: Patriot, 1991.

Coelho, V. H. *Across the Palk Straits: India-Sri Lanka Relations*. Dehra Dun: Palit & Palit, 1976.

Cohen, Stephen P., and Sunil Dasgupta. *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012.

Colaresi, Michael P. *Democracy Declassified: The Secrecy Dilemma in National Security*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Copland, Ian. *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Cox, M., G. John Ikenberry, and T. Inoguchi, eds. *American Democracy Promotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Crawford, Robert M. A., and D. S. L. Jarvis. *International Relations - Still an American Social Science?* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Creagh Coen, Terence. *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1971.

Daalder, Ivo H, and James M Lindsay. "America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy." (2005).

Dahiya, Rumel, and Behuria K Ashok, eds. *India's Neighbourhood: Challenges in the Next Two Decades*. New Delhi: Pentagon 2012.

Dalvi, John P. *Himalayan Blunder*. Bombay: Thacker & Co, 1969.

Datta-Ray, Sunanda K. *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2009.

Davis, Alexander E., and Vineet Thakur. "Walking the Thin Line: India's Anti-Racist Diplomatic Practice in South Africa, Canada, and Australia, 1946–55." *The International History Review* 38, no. 5 (2016): 880-99.

de Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and George W. Downs. "Intervention and Democracy." *International Organization* 60, no. 03 (2006): 627-49.

De Silva, K. M. "The Police and Armed Services." In *Sri Lanka: Problems of Governance*, edited by K. M. De Silva, 347-71. New Delhi: Konark, 1993.

———. *Regional Powers and Small State Security: India and Sri Lanka, 1977-1990*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1996.

De Silva, K. M., and W. Howard Wriggins. *J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: A Political Biography V.1*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

———. *J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: A Political Biography V.2*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

De Silva, Mervyn. *Crisis Commentaries: Selected Political Writings of Mervyn De Silva*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2001.

Defence, Ministry of. "Annual Report 2005-06." New Delhi, 2006.

Deo, Arvind. "South Asian Neighbours." *World Focus* 12, no. 143-144 (1991): 27-33.

Destradi, Sandra. *Indian Foreign and Security Policy in South Asia: Regional Power Strategies*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

———. "Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership." *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 04 (2010): 903-30.

Devare, Sudhir T. "Oral History: India's 'Rediscovery' of the East." *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 6, no. 3 (2011): 337-56.

DeVotta, Neil. *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Diamond, Larry. "Promoting Democracy." *Foreign Policy*, no. 87 (1992): 25-46.

Dixit, J. N. *Across Borders: Fifty Years of India's Foreign Policy*. Picus Books New Delhi, 1998.

———. *Assignment Colombo*. Delhi: Konark, 1998.

———, ed. *External Affairs: Cross-Border Relations*. New Delhi: Lotus, 2003.

———. *India's Foreign Policy and Its Neighbours*. New Delhi: Gyan, 2001.

———. *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*. New Delhi: UBS 1996.

———. *Role of the Armed Forces in the Formulation of India's Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: United Service Institution of India, 2002.

Dormandy, Xenia. "Is India, or Will It Be, a Responsible International Stakeholder?". *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2007): 117-30.

Doyle, Michael W. "Liberalism and World Politics." *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 04 (1986): 1151-69.

Dubey, Muchkund. *India's Foreign Policy: Coping with the Changing World*. New Delhi: Pearson, 2013.

Dutt, Subimal. *With Nehru in the Foreign Office*. Calcutta: Minerva Associates 1977.

Egreteau, Renaud. "Burmese Indians in Contemporary Burma: Heritage, Influence, and Perceptions since 1988." *Asian Ethnicity* 12, no. 1 (2011): 33-54.

———. "A Passage to Burma? India, Development, and Democratization in Myanmar." *Contemporary Politics* 17, no. 4 (2011): 467-86.

———. *Wooing the Generals: India's New Burma Policy*. New Delhi: Authorspress 2003.

Egreteau, Renaud, and Larry Jagan. *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding the Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2013.

Einsiedel, Sebastian von, David Malone, and Suman Pradhan, eds. *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

English, Robert D. "Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End: A Reply to Brooks and Wohlforth." *International Security* 26, no. 4 (2002): 70-92.

Fernando, Austin. *My Belly Is White*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2008.

Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887-917.

Fischer-Tine, Harald, and Michael Mann, eds. *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*. London: Anthem Press, 2004.

Fisher, James F. *Living Martyrs: Individuals and Revolution in Nepal*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Fisher, Michael H. "Indirect Rule in the British Empire: The Foundations of the Residency System in India (1764-1858)." *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 3 (1984): 393-428.

Flemes, Daniel, ed. *Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Gaige, Frederick H. *Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Ganguly, S. "India's Foreign Policy Grows Up." *World Policy Journal* 20, no. 4 (2003): 41-47.

Ganguly, Sumit, and David P. Fidler, eds. *India and Counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Ganguly, Sumit, and Manjeet S. Pardesi. "Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy." *India Review* 8, no. 1 (2009): 4-19.

Garver, John W. *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.

Gautam, P. K. , Saurabh Mishra, and Arvind Gupta, eds. *Indigenous Historical Knowledge: Kautilya and His Vocabulary*. New Delhi: Pentagon, 2015.

Gavin, Francis J., and James B. Steinberg. "Mind the Gap: Why Policymakers and Scholars Ignore Each Other, and What Should Be Done About It." *Carnegie Reporter* 6, no. 4 (2012): 10-17.

George, Alexander L. *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993.

Gilmour, David. *The Ruling Caste : Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Gokhale, Nitin A. *Sri Lanka, from War to Peace*. New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2009.

Goldstein, Judith, and Robert O. Keohane. *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Gooneratne, John. *A Decade of Confrontation: Sri Lanka and India in the 1980s*. Pannipitiya: Stamford Lake, 2000.

Gray, Colin S. "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back." *Review of international studies* 25, no. 01 (1999): 49-69.

Guha, Ramachandra. *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*. Pan Macmillan, 2011.

Guilhot, Nicolas. *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and International Order*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

———. *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Gujral, Inder K. *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Hay House, 2011.

Gunaratna, Rohan. "Impact of the Mobilized Tamil Diaspora on the Protracted Conflict in Sri Lanka." In *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons* edited by Rupesinghe Kumar, 301-28. Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006.

———. *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies*. Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993.

Gupta, Partha Sarathi, and Anirudh Deshpande. *The British Raj and Its Indian Armed Forces, 1857-1939*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Hachhethu, Krishna. "Nepal's India Policy under Communist Government in Nepal." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 227-38.

Hagerty, Devin T. "India's Regional Security Doctrine." *Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (1991): 351-63.

Haksar, Nandita. *Rogue Agent: How India's Military Intelligence Betrayed the Burmese Resistance*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2009.

Haksar, Parmeshwar N. *Indias Foreign Policy and Its Problems*. New Delhi: Patriot, 1989.

Hall, Ian. "India's New Public Diplomacy." *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (2012): 1089-110.

Hanauer, Larry, and Peter Chalk. *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan*. Washington DC: RAND, 2012.

Harrison, Selig S. *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Hashim, Ahmed. *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Hazarika, Sanjoy, and V. R. Raghavan, eds. *Conflicts in the Northeast: Internal and External Effects*. New Delhi: Vij Books, 2011.

Heginbotham, Eric, and George Gilboy. *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Hoffmann, Stanley. "An American Social Science: International Relations." *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 41-60.

Hoffmann, Stanley. "Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possiblities of Ethical International Politics." Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981.

Hogben, W. Murray. "An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianization of the Indian Political Service." *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 4 (1981): 751-69.

Horowitz, Donald L. *Coup Theories and Officers' Motives: Sri Lanka in Comparative Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Hudson, G. F. "The Paradox of Jawaharlal Nehru: Democracy at Home, and Abroad?". *Commentary* 22, no. 6 (1956): 525-32.

Hudson, Valerie M. *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.

Husain, Asad. *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal, 1857-1947: A Diplomatic History of Nepal*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1970.

Hutchins, Francis G. *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

IDEA. *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001.

Ikenberry, G. John, ed. *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-First Century*: Princeton University Press, 2009.

———. "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order." *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 71-87.

———. "Why Export Democracy?". *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-)* 23, no. 2 (1999): 56-65.

Isaacs, Harold Robert. *Scratches on Our Minds: American Views of China and India*. New York: J. Day, 1958.

Jaishankar, Dhruva. "A Uniquely Indian Realism." *Pragati*, no. 38 (2010): 3-5.

Jayatilleka, Dayan. *Long War, Cold Peace: Sri Lanka's North-South Crisis*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2014.

Jayawardane, Amal, ed. *Documents on Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy: 1947-1965*. Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2004.

Jetly, Nancy. "India and the Domestic Turmoil in South Asia." In *Domestic Conflicts in South Asia: Political Dimensions*, edited by Urmila Phadnis, 66-83. New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1986.

Jha, Nalini K. *Domestic Imperatives in India's Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: South Asian, 2002.

Jha, Prashant. *Battles of the New Republic: A Contemporary History of Nepal*. New Delhi: Aleph, 2014.

Johnston, Alastair I. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

———. "Thinking About Strategic Culture." *International security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 32-64.

Johnstone, William C. *Burma's Foreign Policy: A Study in Neutralism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Joshi, Bhuwan L., and Leo E. Rose. *Democratic Innovations in Nepal: A Case Study of Political Acculturation*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1966.

Kapur, Harish. *India's Foreign Policy, 1947-1992: Shadows and Substance*. New Delhi: Sage, 1994.

Karnad, Bharat. *India's Nuclear Policy*. Westport: Praeger, 2008.

Katari, R. D. *A Sailor Remembers*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1982.

Kaul, Triloki N. *Reminiscences, Discreet and Indiscreet*. New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1982.

Kaye, John William, ed. *Selections from the Papers of Lord Metcalfe*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1855.

Keenleyside, T. A. "Diplomatic Apprenticeship: Pre-Independence Origins of Indian Diplomacy and Its Relevance for the Post-Independence Foreign Policy." *India Quarterly* 432 (1987): 97-120.

Kennedy, Andrew. *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru: National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Kennedy, Paul M. *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Keohane, Robert O. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Khan, Yasmin. *India at War: The Subcontinent and the Second World War*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Khanna, Vinod C. "Stability through Cooperation." *Seminar* 584, no. April (2008): xx-xx.

Khilnani, S., R. Kumar, P. B. Mehta, P. Menon, N. Nilekani, S. Raghavan, S. Saran, and S. Varadarajan, eds. *Non-Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century*. New Delhi Centre for Policy Research 2012.

Khilnani, Sunil. *The Idea of India*. Penguin Books India, 1999.

———. "India's Rise: The Search for Wealth and Power in the Twenty-First Century." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, 681-98. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Khosla, I. P. "India and Myanmar." In *Indian Foreign Policy: Challanges and Opportunities*, edited by Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta, xx-xx. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007.

———. "Myanmar: Cohesion and Liberalism." *Strategic Analysis* 21, no. 1 (1998): 1639-69.

Khosla, Madhav, ed. *Letters for a Nation: From Jawaharlal Nehru to His Chief Ministers, 1947-1963*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2014.

Kissinger, Henry A. "The Limits of Universalism." *New Criterion* 30, no. 10 (2012): 21-23.

———. "A Memo to the Next President." *Newsweek*, September 19, 1988, 34-41.

Kodikara, Shelton U., ed. *Dilemmas of Indo-Sri Lankan Relations*. Colombo: Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, 1991.

Kohli, Atul, ed. *The Success of India's Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Koirala, B. P. *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollections*. Himal, 2001.

Koirala, Matrika P. *A Role in a Revolution*. Lalitpur: Jagadamba Prakashan/Himal, 2008.

Kotelawala, John L. *An Asian Prime Minister's Story*. London: G. G. Harrap, 1956.

Krause, Keith, and Michael C. Williams. *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Krishna, Sankaran. *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Krishnappa, V., and Princy George, eds. *Grand Strategy for India 2020 and Beyond*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012.

Kumar, Rajiv, and Santosh Kumar. *In the National Interest: A Strategic Foreign Policy for India*. New Delhi: BS Books, 2010.

Lee, Kuan Yew. *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965-2000*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.

Legro, Jeffrey. *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Lintner, Bertil. *Great Game East: India, China, and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier*. Noida: Harper Collins, 2012.

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion* [in English]. New York: Macmillan, 1922.

Lunstead, Jeffrey J. *The United States' Role in Sri Lanka's Peace Process, 2002-2006*. Colombo: The Asia Foundation, 2007.

Lynn-Jones, Sean M. *Why the United States Should Spread Democracy*. Boston: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 1998.

Madan, Tanvi. "Officialdom: South Block and Beyond." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, 232-46. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

———. "With an Eye to the East: The China Factor and the U.S.-India Relationship, 1949-1979." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2012.

Mahajan, Sneh. *British Foreign Policy, 1874-1914: The Role of India*. London: Routledge, 2002.

———. "The Foreign Policy of the Raj and Its Legacy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, 51-64. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Mahendra, Bir B. S. D. *Pages of History: A Collection of Proclamations, Messages and Addresses, Series 1*. Kathmandu: Ministry of National Guidance, 1963.

———. *Statement of Principles, Foreign Policy Speeches*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Panchayat Affairs, 1964.

Malik, Ved P. "Reflections on Indo-Myanmar Relations." *Scholar Warrior* Fall (2012): 2-13.

Mallavarapu, Siddharth. "Theorizing India's Foreign Relations." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, 35-50. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Malone, David M. *Does the Elephant Dance?* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Malone, David, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Manchanda, Rita. "Diplomacy: Reasons of State." *Far Eastern Economic Review* 156, no. 18 (1993): 12.

Manoharan, N. "Enter the Dragon: China Factor in India-Sri Lanka Relations." In *India and Sri Lanka: Future Imperfect*, edited by S. Paranjape and R. Abhyankar, 103-13. New Delhi: G B Books, 2014.

Manor, James. *The Expedient Utopian: Bandaranaike and Ceylon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Mantena, Karuna. "Another Realism: The Politics of Gandhian Nonviolence." *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 455-70.

Markey, D. "Developing India's Foreign Policy "Software"." *Asia Policy* 8, no. 1 (2009): 73-96.

Maung, Maung. *The 1988 Uprising in Burma*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Maxwell, Neville. "Henderson Brooks Report: An Introduction." *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 14/15 (2001): 1189-93.

Maxwell, Neville G. *India's China War*. Garden City: Anchor, 1972.

McKay, Alex. *Tibet and the British Raj : The Frontier Cadre, 1904-1947*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997.

MEA. "Annual Report 1955-56." New Delhi 1956.

———. "Annual Report 1956-57." New Delhi 1957.

———. "Annual Report 1961-62." New Delhi 1962.

———. "Annual Report 1962-63." New Delhi 1963.

———. "Annual Report 1989-90." New Delhi 1990.

———. "Annual Report 1990-91." New Delhi 1991.

———. "Annual Report 1991-92." New Delhi 1992.

———. "Annual Report 2003-04." New Delhi 2004.

———. "Annual Report 2004-05." New Delhi 2005.

———. "Annual Report 2005-06." New Delhi 2006.

———. "Annual Report 2006-07." New Delhi 2007.

———. "Annual Report 2007-08." New Delhi 2008.

———. "Annual Report 2008-09." New Delhi 2009.

———. "Annual Report 2009-10." New Delhi 2010.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1955." New Delhi 1956.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1956." New Delhi 1957.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1957." New Delhi 1958.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1958." New Delhi 1959.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1959." New Delhi 1960.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1960." New Delhi 1961.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1961." New Delhi 1962.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1962." New Delhi 1963.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1964." New Delhi 1965.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1965." New Delhi 1966.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1984." New Delhi 1985.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1985." New Delhi 1986.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1986." New Delhi 1988.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1987." New Delhi 1988.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1988." New Delhi 1989.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1989." New Delhi 1990.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1990." New Delhi 1991.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1991." New Delhi 1992.

———. "Foreign Affairs Record 1995." New Delhi 1996.

Mehta, Ashok K. *The Royal Nepal Army: Meeting the Maoist Challenge*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2005.

Mehta, Jagat S. *Negotiating for India: Resolving Problems through Diplomacy*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2006.

———. *Rescuing the Future: Bequeathed Misperceptions in International Relations*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2008.

———. *The Tryst Betrayed: Reflections on Diplomacy and Development*. New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2010.

Mehta, Pratap B. "Reluctant India." [In English]. *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (2011): 97-109.

———. "Still under Nehru's Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India." *India Review* 8, no. 3 (2009): 209-33.

Mehta, Uday Singh. *Liberalism and Empire: India in British Liberal Thought*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Menon, Kumara P. S. *Many Worlds Revisited: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1981.

Menon, Prabhakar. "The Quiet Innovator: Foreign Policy under P. V. Narasimha Rao." In *The Ambassadors' Club: The Indian Diplomat at Large*, edited by Krishna V. Rajan, 287-312. New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012.

Menon, Shivshankar. "K. Subrahmanyam and India's Strategic Culture." *Pragati*, no. 59 (2012): 21-26.

Menon, Vapal P. *Story of the Integration of the Indian States*. Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1956.

Metcalf, Thomas R. *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

———. *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Mihaly, Eugene B. *Foreign Aid and Politics in Nepal: A Case Study*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Mill, John Stuart. "A Few Words on Non-Intervention." *New England Review* 27, no. 3 (2006 [1859]): 252-64.

Miller, Manjari Chatterjee. "India's Feeble Foreign Policy: A Would-Be Great Power Resists Its Own Rise." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2013): 14-19.

———. *Wronged by Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Mishra, Pankaj. *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 2012.

Misra, B. B. *The Administrative History of India, 1834-1947*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Mitra, Subrata K. "The Reluctant Hegemon: India's Self-Perception and the South Asian Strategic Environment." *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 3 (2003): 399-417.

Mohan, C. Raja. "Balancing Interests and Values: India's Struggle with Democracy Promotion." *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2007): 99-115.

———. *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: Viking, 2003.

———. "India's New Role in the Indian Ocean." *Seminar* 617, no. Sept. (2011): xx-xx.

———. "The Return of the Raj." *American Interest* 5, no. 5 (2010): 4-11.

———. "Rising India: Partner in Shaping the Global Commons?". *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2010): 133-48.

Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* [in English]. New York: Knopf, 1954.

———. "To Intervene or Not to Intervene." *Foreign Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1967): 425-36.

Mukherjee, Anit. "Facing Future Challenges." *The RUSI Journal* 156, no. 5 (2011): 30-37.

Mukherjee, Mithi. *India in the Shadows of Empire: A Legal and Political History, 1774-1950*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Mullik, B. N. *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*. Bombay: Allied, 1971.

Muni, S. D. "Bringing the Maoists Down the Hills: India's Role." In *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace.*, edited by Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone and Suman Pradhan, 313-31. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

———. *Foreign Policy of Nepal*. National Publishing House, 1973.

———. *India and Nepal: A Changing Relationship*. New Delhi: Konark 1992.

———. *India's Foreign Policy: The Democracy Dimension (with Special Reference to Its Neighbours)*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2009.

———. "Nepal as a Zone of Peace." *Strategic Analysis* 7, no. 10 (1984): 780-92.

———. "Nepal's Democratic Evolution: Roles of Inclusive Consensus and India." In *Nepal in Transition: A Way Forward*, edited by D. P. Tripathi, 63-71. New Delhi: Vij 2011.

———. *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis*. New Delhi: Sage, 1993.

Muravchik, Joshua. *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1992.

Myint, Soe. *Burma File: A Question of Democracy*. New Delhi: India Research Press, 2003.

Myoe, Maung Aung. *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces since 1948*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2009.

———. *In the Name of Pauk-Phaw: Myanmar's China Policy since 1948*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011.

Myrdal, Gunnar. *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*. New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1968.

Nandy, B. B. "Security of the North-East Himalayan Frontier: Challenges and Responses." In *Himalayan Frontiers of India: Historical, Geo-Political and Strategic*, edited by K. Warikoo, 167-79. London: Routledge, 2009.

Narang, V., and P. Staniland. "Institutions and Worldviews in Indian Foreign Security Policy." *India Review* 11, no. 2 (2012): 76-94.

Narayan, Shriman. *India and Nepal: An Exercise in Open Diplomacy*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1970.

Narayan Swamy, M. R. *The Tiger Vanquished: Ltte's Story*. New Delhi: Sage, 2010.

Narayanan, M. K. "Role of Intelligence and Security Agencies." In *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons* edited by Rupesinghe Kumar, 115-26. Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006.

Narlikar, Amrita. "India Rising: Responsible to Whom?". *International Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2013): 595-614.

Nayar, Baldev Raj, and T. V. Paul. *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. *Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches*. New York: John Day, 1950.

———. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 10, Second Series*. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1977.

———. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 27, Second Series*. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2000.

———. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 28, Second Series*. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2001.

———. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 43, Second Series*. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2011.

Niebuhr, R. *The Irony of American History*. University of Chicago Press, 2008 [1952].

Nu, U. *U Nu: Saturday's Son*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

Ollapally, Deepa M. *The Politics of Extremism in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Owen, John M. "The Foreign Imposition of Domestic Institutions." *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (2002): 375-409.

Pai, Nitin. *The Paradox of Proximity: India's Approach to Fragility in the Neighbourhood*. New York: NYU Center on International Cooperation, 2011.

Pakem, B. *India Burma Relations*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1992.

Pant, Harsh V. *The China Syndrome: Grappling with an Uneasy Relationship*. Noida: Harper Collins 2010.

———. "A Rising India's Search for a Foreign Policy." *Orbis* 53, no. 2 (2009): 250-64.

Parajulee, Ramjee P. *The Democratic Transition in Nepal*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

Paranjape, Srikanth, and Rajendra M. Abhyankar, eds. *India and Sri Lanka: Future Imperfect*. New Delhi: G B Books, 2014.

Pardesi, Manjeet S. *Deducing India's Grand Strategy of Regional Hegemony from Historical and Conceptual Perspectives*. Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 2005.

Patrick, Stewart. "Irresponsible Stakeholders? The Difficulty of Integrating Rising Powers." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 44-53.

Paul, Thaza V., ed. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Pee, Robert. *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Perkovich, George. "India's Nuclear Bomb ". Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Phadnis, Urmila. "Nepal: The Politics of Referendum." *Pacific Affairs* 54, no. 3 (1981): 431-54.

Piccone, Ted. *Five Rising Democracies: And the Fate of the International Liberal Order*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016.

Prasad, Bimal. "Jayaprakash Narayan and Nepal." In *Nepal in Transition: A Way Forward*, edited by D. P. Tripathi, 133-36. New Delhi: Vij 2011.

———. *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy: The Indian National Congress and World Affairs, 1885-1947*. Calcutta: Bookland, 1962.

Prasad, Jayant. "India's Neighbours." *Seminar* 668, no. April (2015): xx-xx.

Pritchett, L., M. Woolcock, and M. Andrews. "Capability Traps? The Mechanisms of Persistent Implementation Failure." *Center for Global Development Working Paper*, no. 234 (2010).

Pudaite, Lal T. *Mizoram and Look East Policy*. New Delhi: Akansha, 2010.

Pye, Lucien W. *Politics, Personality and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity*. New Haven: Yale University, 1962.

Raghavan, Pallavi. "Establishing the Ministry of External Affairs." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, 80-91. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Raghavan, Srinath. "At the Cusp of Transformation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M.; Mohan Malone, C. Raja; Raghavan, Srinath, 117-30. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

———. *India's War: World War Ii and the Making of Modern South Asia*. New York: Basic Books, 2016.

———. "Regional Integration: From Pipe Dream to Possibility." *Seminar* 629, no. January (2012): xx-xx.

———. *War and Peace in Modern India*. New Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Rajagopalan, Rajesh. "Realism and Indian Foreign Policy." In *New Directions in Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by Amitabh Mattoo and Happymon Jacob, xx-xx. New Delhi: Haranand, 2013.

Rajan, Krishna V. "Darkness at Noon." In *The Ambassadors' Club: The Indian Diplomat at Large*, edited by Krishna V. Rajan, 34-60. New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012.

Raleigh, Thomas, ed. *Lord Curzon in India; Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy & Governor-General of India, 1898-1905*. London: Macmillan, 1906.

Ram, Amar N., ed. *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy: Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity*. New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 2012.

Ramusack, Barbara N. *The Indian Princes and Their States* [in English]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Rana, A. P. *The Imperatives of Nonalignment: A Conceptual Study of India's Foreign Policy Strategy in the Nehru Period*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1976.

Rana, Kishan S. "Oral History Record of Ambassador Eric Gonsalves." New Delhi: Indian Council for World Affairs, 2012.

Ranatunga, Cyril. *Adventurous Journey from Peace to War, Insurgency to Terrorism*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2009.

Rodrigo, Nihal. "Perspectives from Sri Lanka." In *Emerging China: Prospects of Partnership in Asia*, edited by Sudhir T. Devare, Swaran Singh and Reena Marwah, 241-55. London: Routledge, 2014.

Rose, G. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *World politics* 51, no. 01 (1998): 144-72.

Rose, Leo E. *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

Rose, Richard, and William J M Mackenzie. "Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis." *Political Studies* 39, no. 3 (1991): 446-62.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile: Or, on Education*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

Routray, Bibhu P. "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism." *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1 (2011): 301-21.

Rudolph, Lloyd I. "Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 03 (1961): 283-97.

Ruggie, John G. "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge." *International organization* 52, no. 04 (1998): 855-85.

Runciman, David. *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Sagar, Rahul. "Before Midnight: Views on International Relations, 1857-1947." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, 65-79. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015.

———. "Grand Ideology, Bland Strategy." In *Grand Strategy for India 2020 and Beyond*, edited by V. Krishnappa and George Princy, 64-71. New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012.

Saran, Shyam. "Re-Engaging the Neighbouhood: A Personal Perspective on India's Look East Policy." In *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy: Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity*, edited by Amar N. Ram, xx-xx. New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 2012.

Sarna, Navtej. "Media and Diplomacy." In *Indian Foreign Policy: Challanges and Opportunities*, edited by Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta, 1143-49. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007.

Schaffer, Teresita C. "New Delhi's New Outlook." *Survival* 52, no. 6 (2010): 161-67.

Schaffer, Teresita C., and Howard B. Schaffer. "Better Neighbors?: India and South Asian Regional Politics." *SAIS Review* 18, no. 1 (1998): 109-21.

Scott, David. "India's "Extended Neighborhood" Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power." *India Review* 8, no. 2 (2009): 107-43.

Seekins, Donald M. *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)*. Lanham: Scarecrow, 2006.

Selvanathan, S., and E. Selvanathan. "Defence Expenditure and Economic Growth: A Case Study of Sri Lanka Using Causality Analysis." *International Journal of Development and Conflict* 4, no. 2 (2014): 69-76.

Shein, Nyunt Maung. "India-Myanmar Relations after 2010 Elections." Hong Kong 2012.

Sikri, Rajiv. *Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: Sage, 2009.

Singh, Harkirat. *Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Ipkf Experience Retold*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2007.

Singh, Indu P. "India-Burma Relations." *World Focus*, no. xx January (1992): 7-16.

Singh, K. Natwar. *Walking with Lions: Tales from a Diplomatic Past*. Noida: Harper Collins, 2013.

Singh, Uma Shankar. *Burma and India, 1948-1962 : A Study in the Foreign Policies of Burma and India and Burma's Policy Towards India*. New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1979.

Singh, V. K. *Courage and Conviction: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Aleph, 2013.

Sinha, Atish, and Madhup Mohta, eds. *Indian Foreign Policy: Challanges and Opportunities*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007.

Sinha, Shreenivas K. *A Soldier Recalls*. New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1992.

Sreenivasan, T. P. *Words, Words, Words: Adventures in Diplomacy*. New Delhi: Longman, 2011.

Stobdan, P. "China's Forays into Burma: Implications for India." *Strategic Analysis* 16, no. 1 (1993): 21-37.

Subedi, Surya P. *Dynamics of Foreign Policy and Law: A Study of Indo-Nepal Relations*. London: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Subrahmanyam, K. "India and Its Neighbours: A Conceptual Framework of Peaceful Co-Existence." In *India and Its Neighbourhood*, edited by U. S. Bajpai, 109-39. New Delhi: Lancer, 1986.

———. *Shedding Shibboleths: India's Evolving Strategic Outlook*. New Delhi: Wordsmiths, 2005.

———. "Subcontinental Security." *Strategic Analysis* 5, no. 5-6 (1981): 243-61.

Sullivan, Kate H. "Democracy Promotion and the Problem of Peaceful Coexistence: Exploring the 'Democratic Diplomacy' of India." In *The Democratic Predicament: Cultural Diversity in Europe and India*, edited by Jyotirmaya Tripathy and Sudarsan Padmanabhan, 141-64. London: Routledge, 2014.

Talbott, Strobe. "Democracy and the National Interest." *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 6 (1996): 47-63.

Tanham, George K. "Indian Strategic Culture." *The Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1992): 129-29.

———. *Indian Strategic Thought*. Washington: RAND, 1992.

Tanham, George K., Kanti P. Bajpai, and Amitabh Mattoo, eds. *Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice*. New Delhi: Manohar, 1996.

Tellis, Ashley J. *Nonalignment Redux: The Perils of Old Wine in New Skins*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012.

Thakur, Vineet. "The Colonial Origins of Indian Foreign Policymaking." *Economic & Political Weekly* 49, no. 32 (2014): 58-64.

Tharoor, S. *Reasons of State: Political Development and India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966-1977*. Vikas Publishing House, 1982.

Tharoor, Shashi. *Pax Indica*. London: Allen Lane, 2012.

Tickner, J. Ann. *Self-Reliance Versus Power Politics: The American and Indian Experiences in Building Nation States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Tilakaratna, Bernard. "The Sri Lanka Government and Peace Efforts up to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord: Lessons and Experiences." In *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures, and Lessons*, edited by Rupesinghe Kumar, 47-68. Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence, 2006.

Tinker, Hugh. *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976.

Tripathi, D. P., ed. *Nepal in Transition: A Way Forward*. New Delhi: Vij 2011.

Twining, Daniel. "India's Relations with Iran and Myanmar: "Rogue State" or Responsible Democratic Stakeholder?". *India Review* 7, no. 1 (2008): 1-37.

Twining, Daniel, and Richard Fontaine. "The Ties That Bind? U.S.–Indian Values-Based Cooperation." *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2011): 193-205.

Ulam, Adam B. "Soviet Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy." *World Politics* 11, no. 02 (1959): 153-72.

Upadhyay, Shailendra K. *Tryst with Diplomacy*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1991.

Verghese, B. G. *Reorienting India: The New Geo-Politics of Asia*. New Delhi: Konark, 2001.

Vittachi, Tarzie. *Emergency '58: The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1958.

Vivekanandan, Jayashree. *Interrogating International Relations: India's Strategic Practice and the Return of History*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011.

Walker, R. B. J. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Waltz, Kenneth. "Theory of International Politics." Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Wendt, Alexander E. "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory." *International organization* 41, no. 03 (1987): 335-70.

Wickramaratne, G. E. P. de S., ed. *Ceylon and Kotelawala: A Selection of Speeches Made in the Legislature in Ceylon by John Lionel Kotelawala, 1931-1956*. Dehiwela: n/a, 1964.

Williams, M.C. *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations* London: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Williams, Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Wilson, A. Jeyaratnam. *S. J. V. Chelvanayakam and the Crisis of Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism, 1947-1977: A Political Biography*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

Wilson, Peter. "The Myth of the 'First Great Debate'." *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 05 (1998): 1-16.

Woodruff, Philip. *The Men Who Ruled India*. London: J. Cape, 1953.

Yhome, Khriezo. "India-Myanmar Relations (1998-2008): A Decade of Redefining Bilateral Ties." In *Occasional Paper 10*, 1-29. New Delhi: ORF, 2009.

Youngs, Richard. *The Puzzle of Non-Western Democracy*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015.

Zinkin, Taya. "Indian Foreign Policy: An Interpretation of Attitudes." *World Politics* 7, no. 02 (1955): 179-208.

Curriculum Vitae

Constantino Xavier, born June 5, 1981 in Lisbon, completed his Ph.D. in South Asian Studies at the Johns Hopkins University, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, in Washington DC and currently works as a fellow at Carnegie India, in New Delhi. His research and publications focus on South Asian security issues and India's foreign policy, in particular towards its regional neighborhood, the diaspora, Africa and the European Union. He previously worked at the 21st Century Defense Initiative and the India Project of the Brookings Institution, and held visiting fellowships at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and the Observer Research Foundation, in New Delhi, and at the Regional Center for Strategic Studies, in Sri Lanka. He completed undergraduate studies at the New University of Lisbon (Portugal) and Sciences Po Paris (France), and holds postgraduate degrees (M.A. and M.Phil.) in International Politics from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, in New Delhi, where he also worked as a media correspondent and for the Presidency of the European Union.