

Andreas Hilger / Corinna R. Unger
(eds.)

India in the World since 1947

National and Transnational Perspectives



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Introduction: India in the World since 1947

Andreas Hilger – Corinna R. Unger

In recent years, “India” has become a favorite metaphor to describe developments and phenomena considered characteristic of “globalization.” Rapid economic and population growth, environmental degradation, geostrategic rivalries, megacities, global cultural production: India has it all. Accordingly, India receives much coverage in the media, and comparisons and contrasts with China abound. Yet the excitement about contemporary and future developments in India has produced surprisingly little interest in the historical background of the processes we are observing today. Historians of independent India – both in India and elsewhere – have continued either to focus on diplomatic problems or to situate their studies squarely in the nation state. The transnational turn does not seem to have caught the attention of many historians of contemporary India. We believe, however, that a transnational perspective on the 65 years of India’s independence has much to offer and some to add to existing studies. Our argument is based on the observation that India has a rich history of transnational connections and exchanges, and that it is important to contextualize India’s current developments in its transnational history. Much of what has been happening in the past twenty years has roots which reach back much farther. Only if we study India in the world since 1947 can we understand India in the world today and tomorrow.

Obviously, starting our account with 1947 is based on a pragmatic decision. South Asia and, in later years, the Indian Raj, had a long history of transnational connections and exchanges. Trade, scholarly, religious, and artistic exchanges, and colonialism had contributed to a specific mixture of regionalisms and cosmopolitanism in India. When India became independent in 1947, it did not suddenly become a full-fledged, well-defined, uncontested or unambiguous nation state. In its twisted transformation into a nation state, many of India’s transnational ties and interdependencies stayed alive, others were replaced by new ones, some of them diplomatic, others economic, cultural, or religious. Diplomatically, the Cold War situation demanded that India position itself in the world; its representatives, led by Nehru, chose non-alignment and established close relations with countries belonging to the Global South. India also secured a visible position in international forums like the United Nations. Within Asia, India played an important strategic and political role, especially vis-à-vis the People’s Republic of China. On the economic level, independent India tried to overcome its economic dependence on Great Britain and the other industrialized nations

through a policy of import-substitution industrialization. Yet to close the largest gaps in food, money, and technology, India had to ask for and accept economic and technical aid from the First and the Second Worlds; hence, new forms of economic dependence evolved. Socially, independent India had to come to terms with the co-existence of multiple ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, many of which felt (more) loyal to groups outside India's national borders than to New Delhi. For centuries, Indians had migrated to other parts of the world; in the second half of the twentieth century, new, faster communication technologies fostered multidirectional flows of cultural goods and ideas, religious practices, and other exchanges.

The emphasis on India's transnational entanglements is not to suggest that the Indian nation state did not matter in the years after 1947. Undoubtedly, the new leadership wanted the state to play a decisive role in most aspects of Indian life in the post-independence period: In the view of the ruling elites under Nehru and his successors, the majestic tasks independent India faced since 1947 – creating a national identity, providing for a comprehensive and broadly accepted national vision, promoting India's economic and social development, and securing its national independence – could not be realized without a strong nation state. Hence, one could argue that India's post-independence history was characterized by the simultaneity of national and transnational processes, some of which fueled each other while others produced tensions.

To study the interplay between national and transnational trends and developments, we propose to rely on four analytical, interdependent categories: Identities, ideas, resources, and power. In our understanding, those categories can be useful in trying to gain insight into the complex and multifaceted spheres of negotiations, interactions, and competitive situations which characterized India since 1947, and which have contributed to shaping India as we observe it today.

The question of what kind of national, regional, and cultural identity would be possible and appropriate for as complex and heterogeneous a society as India's has occupied scholars and politicians for decades. Holding together the newly created Indian state became one of the central challenges for the Nehru government in the post-1947 years. Should, and could, India decide on a national religion, a national language, a national identity? Was it possible, under the impact of the violent partition of the Indian subcontinent, to create a sense of commonality that bridged the divisions between Hindus and Muslims, between regional cultures, between castes and languages? *William Gould's* discussion of Indian secularism and the positions and strategies of Muslims in India before and after independence highlights the relevance of religious divisions in Indian politics and the imprints left on Indian society by the colonial era. Under these circumstances, did minority policies have the potential to overcome differences

within the new nation? Who was going to be left out by these policies, and what kind of consequences would the Indian state be faced with as a result? The linguistic secessionism India experienced in the years and decades following independence, and the measures the Indian government used to prevent a break-up of the union, which *Nicolas Blarel* describes in his essay, provide insight into both the possibilities and the limitations of the Indian state in tackling problems arising from cultural diversity and political competition. Similarly, radical political ideas and groups worked to undermine the hegemony of Nehru's Congress Party. In the eyes of Delhi, the presence and demands of the Communist Party, which held close ties to Moscow, challenged India's political sovereignty, most famously in the cases of Telengana and Kerala, as the contribution by *Vijay Singh* illustrates.

While heavily occupied with a range of domestic problems, India at the same time had to position itself within Asia and define its role as an Asian nation. As *Manjeet Pardesi* demonstrates, the tense relationship with China and Pakistan shaped India's foreign and security policies to a remarkable degree. Under the conditions defined by Sino-Indian rivalry, the build-up of the Indian military presented an attempt to overcome the structural limitations imposed on Indian foreign policy and to anchor and expand India's influence on the continent. India also tried to establish itself as an international player. Its leading role in the non-aligned movement, and Nehru's prominence in many Third World nations, served this goal well. In fact, *Jennifer Bussell* argues that India's democratic strength was due in large part to Nehru's successful foreign policy based on the strategy of non-alignment. Yet even a self-confident, proudly non-aligned India could not escape the Cold War struggle and the influence of the United States. *Robert McMahon* provides an overview of this complicated relationship. It is complemented by *Srinath Raghavan's* exploration of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, which reflected Indira Gandhi's attempt to secure and stabilize India's regional interests and identity at a time when South and South-east Asia were in turmoil. In those years, Europe might have seemed far away, but, as *Amit Das Gupta* shows with his analysis of diplomatic relations between New Delhi, East Berlin, and Bonn, Indian politicians closely followed European developments and tried to identify situations which could serve India's interests in building a reputation as a serious and reliable actor.

Yet it would be shortsighted to look only at India in trying to understand how Indian identities evolved in the years after 1947. Indian diasporas in different parts of the world participated in and contributed to the process, while at the same time rendering the question of what "being Indian" meant ever more complex, as *Sunil Bhatia* and *Anjali Ram* investigate in their essay. The media played an important role in this context. Whereas Bollywood movies are often

considered an effort in Indian self-marketing abroad, the role those productions play for Indian diasporas in keeping a sense of commonality and ties to India alive should not be underestimated. Generally, the role and the presence of the media shaped Indian society and mirrored its political and cultural development at the same time. *Nadja-Christina Schneider*, in discussing the “medialization” of Indian society, argues that the pedagogical role the media played in Indian public life in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly their support of the national goal of “development,” slowly but surely made way for more market-oriented media practices and for programs (especially on television) which promoted an image of Indian “modernity” intimately tied to consumerism.

The construction of the Delhi Metro and the building of the city of Chandigarh are perhaps the most famous and most visible expressions of the effort to create and present – to Indians and to the world – a “modern India.” As we learn from *Michael Mann’s* history of the Delhi Metro, the roots of independent India’s infrastructure policies and programs reach back far into the colonial era. Urbanization, while largely unplanned by the British, became a priority of the new India. By drawing on the prestige of the French architect Le Corbusier and the ideas discussed by the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in the interwar period, Chandigarh, described here by *Boris Niclas-Tölle*, presented a distinct example of the transnational transfer and adaptation of ideas and practices in a postcolonial situation. Similarly, economists from a variety of countries traveled to India in the postwar years to study the Indian economy – a singular opportunity to test new methods – and offer advice to the Delhi government on economic policy issues. Many members of the Indian administration were not very eager to receive advice, but Indian chief planner Mahalanobis used the presence of international experts to gain legitimacy for his development strategy of rapid industrialization, *David Engerman* argues. In highlighting the nexus between Indian economic development and international prestige, one can draw a parallel to India’s eagerness to become a nuclear power, which *Hans-Joachim Bieber* portrays in his essay. Producing sufficient amounts of cheap energy was a precondition for India to industrialize, while proving that Indian scientists, with the support of know-how from abroad, were able to master nuclear technology would, Indian politicians hoped, end once and for all debates about India being “backward.”

Generally, economic problems loomed large over India in the post-1947 years and, in the perception of many Indians, seriously inhibited their country’s aspirations. Resource scarcity was one problem. Another was the predominance of agriculture and the question of how to provide employment for millions of formally unskilled laborers in an industrializing economy. In this situation, India’s high population growth rate caused increasing concern among politicians,

economists, and public health administrators in India and abroad. Conceptual continuities reaching back to the colonial period, as well as transnational actors, influenced independent India's family planning policies, according to *Mohan Rao*, whose contribution closes with a critical discussion of the privatization of Indian health services in the context of globalization. *Dietmar Rothermund's* essay probes deeper into the effects of globalization on the Indian economy by providing a detailed picture of India's past and present efforts to promote employment and curb unemployment.

Under the notably difficult circumstances characterizing the situation of India since 1947, many observers were, and are, honestly surprised that the Indian democracy has been able to survive and grow stronger. The opening and liberalization of the Indian economy since the early 1990s have placed new pressure on Indian society, but also created possibilities for new developments. While we know, thanks to the essays contained in this volume, some about India's past, India's future appears wide open.

I. Identities

India in Asia: India's relations with Southeast Asia and China, 1962-1991

Manjeet S. Pardesi

Introduction

This paper aims to understand India's relations with China and its Southeast Asian neighbors in the period between the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the end of the Cold War in 1991. It will be argued that India's "tilt" towards the former Soviet Union, the closed nature of the Indian economy, and India's military interventions in its South Asian neighborhood led many (pro-Western) Southeast Asian states to view India as a threatening state for much of the Cold War period. Furthermore, the emergence of the China-Pakistan entente followed by a Chinese-Pakistani-American alignment meant that India's relations with China continued to remain limited but conflict-ridden during this period. It was not until 1988 that the stalemate in Sino-Indian relations was broken by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's landmark trip to China, which took place at the time of Sino-Soviet rapprochement and the erosion of the Indo-Soviet partnership. This period also coincided with the growth of Indian military power. India's relations with Southeast Asia began to improve only after the end of the Cold War (and the Indo-Soviet partnership) and the opening up of the Indian economy in 1991.

India in Asia, 1947-1962

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India and the "founding architect" of its foreign policy, vigorously opposed global military blocs and chose to safeguard the strategic autonomy of his newly independent state by pursuing a policy of non-alignment.² At the same time, an inchoate India-centered pan-Asianism was central to Nehru's approach to Asia. He was convinced that as a consequence of its actual and latent (potential) material power and due to its geostrategic location, India was bound to play a central role in Asian affairs. "It is well-recognized today all over the world that the future of Asia will be power-

1 Dixit, *Makers of India's Foreign Policy*; Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Letter to Yashwant Sinha, 77.

2 On India's policy of nonalignment, see Thomas, "Nonalignment and Indian Security: Nehru's Rationale and Legacy," 153-171.

fully determined by the future of India. India becomes more and more the *pivot of Asia*.”³

In order to position itself at the center of Asian geopolitics, India undertook some very important foreign policy initiatives. Even before independence, Nehru authorized the Indian Council of World Affairs to organize an “unofficial” Asian Relations Conference (ARC) – the first gathering of Asian countries and colonial territories organized by an Asian state – in New Delhi.⁴ India also played a leading diplomatic role in supporting the independence of Indonesia in the late 1940s. New Delhi even organized the Conference on Indonesia in New Delhi – the first conference led by an Asian government to deal with a specific issue in Asia – to promote the cause of Indonesia’s independence.⁵ Newly independent Burma, which was plagued with numerous insurgencies in the late 1940s, was the first foreign state to receive arms, ammunition, and transport planes from India as early as 1949.⁶ India also played a very active diplomatic role in the decolonization of Indo-China in the early 1950s. The Geneva accord on Indo-China had established three International Commissions of Supervision and Control (ICSC) for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Each of these commissions was headed by an Indian chairman.⁷

On the eve of India’s independence, Nehru had articulated an “Asian Monroe Doctrine,” that was the complete disappearance of Western militaries from Asia, and for which cooperation with China was deemed essential.⁸ Nehru believed that recognition of Tibetan independence would earn India permanent hostility from China, which would also have meant the end for Asia’s recrudescence in world affairs, for which Sino-Indian cooperation was essential in Nehru’s view. Consequently, Nehru’s India discontinued its diplomatic relations with the Nationalist regime of Jiang Jieshi, and became one of the first non-

3 Nehru’s address to India’s Chief Ministers on 2 October 1949. Quoted in Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 59.

4 The ARC ran from 23 March 1947 through 12 April 1947. It was a gathering of over 200 delegates from 30 countries and colonial territories. See Appadorai, “The Asian Relations Conference in Perspective,” 275-285.

5 This conference was attended by delegates from a total of 15 countries. Thien, *India and South East Asia*, 92-102.

6 On the Indian government’s military and financial help to Burma, see Ton, *India and South East Asia*, 169-172.

7 For details, see Sardesai, *Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam*.

8 Nehru, “A Monroe Doctrine for Asia,” August 9, 1947. For the full text, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series, Volume III, 133-5.

communist states to recognize the People's Republic of China in late 1949.⁹ Nehru accepted the "One China" policy and did not raise the issue of China's military annexation of Tibet in 1950-51 at the United Nations. In 1954, India and China signed the *Panchshila* agreement, in which India explicitly recognized Chinese sovereignty in Tibet.¹⁰ Nehru's India also acted as mediator between China and the world during the Korean War (1950-53). After the Korean armistice was signed, India took over the task of chairing the commission for the repatriation of prisoners and agreed that Indian troops would be in charge of that process.¹¹ In 1955, with the complete backing of Nehru, Indonesia organized the Bandung Conference, an event during which Nehru's India introduced China and its Premier Zhou Enlai to the countries of Africa and Asia (and indeed the world).¹²

However, Sino-Indian relations deteriorated rapidly after China's brutal repression of the Tibetan uprising in 1959 and the escape of the Dalai Lama into exile in India on 30 March 1959, where he was granted refuge by the Nehru government. By this time, the Sino/Tibetan-Indian border issue had further soured relations.¹³ China feared Indian expansionism (New Delhi's "forward policy" along their ill-defined borders) and believed that India wanted to restore Tibet's "buffer state" status between the two countries. The rising tension led to a short but bitter war between China and India in 1962, which India, whose forces were ill-prepared, lost.¹⁴ China declared a unilateral ceasefire after restoring the *status quo ante* (pre-1959).¹⁵ The meeting of the non-aligned states of Asia and Africa generated no public support for India during the 1962 Sino-Indian War.¹⁶

9 For details, see Panikkar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat*. Panikkar was India's last ambassador to Nationalist China and the first ambassador to Communist China.

10 Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, Volume 2, 464-477.

11 Heimsath, *India's Role in the Korean War*.

12 Mukherji, "Appraising the Legacy of Bandung: A View from India." Quoted in Tan and Acharya, *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order*, 160-179.

13 Ganguly, Sumit. "India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security." Quoted in Frankel and Harding, *The India-China Relationship: What the United States Needs to Know*, 103-133.

14 Garver, John. "China's Decision for War with India in 1962." Quoted in Johnston and Ross, *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, 86-130.

15 While China came to decisively control the disputed Aksai Chin region in the western sector, the PLA unilaterally withdrew from the eastern sector.

16 Heimsath and Mansingh, *A Diplomatic History of Modern India*, 79.

India's disastrous military defeat, which came at a time when the Cold War was becoming entrenched in Southeast Asia, showed that India would not be able to offer traditional military security to the newly emergent states of South-east Asia. However, this was deemed essential by the Southeast Asian states, which were facing numerous security issues related to the maintenance of their territorial integrity, insurgencies (often with external support), and the development of viable national identities. "It was evident even before [the] Geneva [accords on Indo-China] that recognition as a major power was a primary political aim of Chinese diplomacy, in pursuit of which India – then pre-eminent in Asia – had to be first befriended and then humbled."¹⁷ Following India's loss at the hands of the Chinese, India became a relatively marginal player in Southeast Asia for the rest of the Cold War.

India in Asia, 1962-1991

Overhauling India's Security Policy

The Sino-Indian War had come as a huge shock to the Indian political and strategic communities. India's military defeat reduced its status in the developing world. Nehru's hope for Asian solidarity, predicated on peaceful relations with China, was shattered. The Sino-Indian War also had a major impact on Indian defense and foreign policy. India began a program of massive military modernization and trained ten new mountain divisions for high-altitude warfare. New Delhi also decided to build a forty-five squadron air force, and raised its defense production base while upgrading its operational infrastructure.¹⁸ More importantly, the "issue of military reverses at the hands of China went beyond military preparedness to India's conceptual approach to international affairs."¹⁹

The war with China proved that India needed military help from external powers to meet the Chinese military challenge. India sought and received military assistance from the United States and the United Kingdom. These Western powers provided India with its first modern air defense systems.²⁰ India and the United States also engaged in limited cooperation with regard to the Chinese occupation of Tibet after the war.²¹ In October 1962, the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs set up an Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBF) to guard India's bor-

17 Stargardt, "The Emergence of the Asian System of Powers," 594.

18 Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defense Policies: 1947-1965*, 192-207.

19 Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status*, 150.

20 Anthony, *The Arms Trade and Medium Powers: Case Studies of India and Pakistan 1947-1990*, 50.

21 Kohli and Conboy, *Spies in the Himalayas: Secret Missions and Perilous Climbs*.

ders with China/Tibet. The ITBF force included ethnic Tibetans in its ranks.²² However, Indo-American military co-operation proved to be of a limited and short-lived nature.

Pakistan, India's subcontinental rival, and a staunch military ally of the United States by this time, had profound misgivings about the American-India military relationship. India itself was uncertain about close military cooperation with Washington, whose representatives demanded that India must commit to opposing communism globally prior to the establishment of substantive military cooperation between the two countries.²³ Finally, the outbreak of India's second war with Pakistan over Kashmir in 1965 led to an arms embargo by the United States against the subcontinent that ended the nascent American-Indian military cooperation. Consequently, India came to view the United States as an unreliable military-strategic partner – a sentiment that persisted in New Delhi for the rest of the Cold War.

India's Security Perceptions vis-à-vis China

In the aftermath of the 1962 war, the militarization of Tibet had a strong impact on India's perception of China. The 17-Point Agreement of 1951 between Tibet and China, which had legitimized the Chinese military annexation of Tibet, had granted a substantial degree of autonomy to Tibet.²⁴ However, by the time of the Chinese military crackdown of Tibet in 1959, any semblance of Tibetan autonomy as promised in the Agreement and implemented in the early 1950s "was destroyed".²⁵ As a consequence of the 1959 Lhasa revolt and the 1962 war, the presence of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Tibet increased dramatically, which was perceived in New Delhi as a significant deterioration of India's security situation.²⁶

Sino-Indian relations became further strained after China conducted its first nuclear test on 16 October 1964 in Lop Nur with Soviet assistance.²⁷ The Chinese nuclear test became the basis for a vigorous debate in the Indian Parliament and the media on whether or not India should pursue a nuclear weapons program. India sought but was unable to obtain a nuclear umbrella from the United

22 McGranahan, "Tibet's Cold War: The CIA and the Chushi Gangdrug Resistance, 1956-1974."

23 Barnds, *India, Pakistan, and the Great Powers*, 195.

24 For a text of this agreement, see Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of the Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947*, 449-452.

25 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 56.

26 Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*, 78.

27 Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*.

States, the Soviet Union, and other great powers.²⁸ While the nuclear option was never discarded, the failure to obtain a nuclear guarantee led India to continue, albeit slowly, its Subterranean Nuclear Explosions Project (SNEP), which had begun in 1964.²⁹ India's scientific establishment also played an important role in their country's nuclear quest.³⁰

At the same time, China dramatically improved its relations with India's other rival, Pakistan. In May 1962, even before the Sino-Indian war, China and Pakistan agreed to demarcate their boundaries.³¹ China's Xinjiang province shares a border with Pakistan in the Northern Areas (Hunza and Baltistan in Jammu and Kashmir) – a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.³² In fact, while the Sino-Indian war was underway, China and Pakistan were negotiating the exact location of their boundaries. The agreement was announced in May 1963. China received 1,050 square miles from Pakistan in exchange for 750 square miles of its own territory.³³ India was particularly irked that Pakistan had ceded parts of a region that was a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Article 6 of the Sino-Pakistani border agreement allows India to re-open negotiations with China should its claim over all of Kashmir be recognized.³⁴ In order to avoid such an outcome, and as a consequence of its own geopolitical rationale, China began supporting Pakistan's position on Kashmir.³⁵

The logic of the China-Pakistan entente became apparent to India's security planners when China threatened to open a second front against India during the 1965 India-Pakistan War.³⁶ China is believed to have helped Pakistan plan and implement Operation Gibraltar, an anti-India uprising in Kashmir.³⁷ Later, during the conventional war between India and Pakistan, the People's Liberation

28 Noorani, "India's Quest for a Nuclear Guarantee," 490-502.

29 This ultimately resulted in India's first nuclear test in 1974. See Ganguly, "Why India Joined the Nuclear Club," 30-3.

30 Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy, and the Post-colonial State*. Also see the contribution by Hans-Joachim Bieber in this volume. On the influence of India's scientific community on foreign policy in this period, see Harper and Doel, "Environmental Diplomacy in the Cold War: Weather Control, the United States, and India, 1966-1967," 115-138.

31 On the details of the Sino-Pakistani border demarcation, see Dobell, "Ramifications of the China-Pakistan Border Treaty," 283-295.

32 On the Kashmir dispute, see Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace*.

33 Ganguly, "Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security," 118.

34 See Dobell, "Ramifications of the China-Pakistan Border Treaty," 288.

35 Garver, "China's Kashmir Policies," 1-24.

36 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 194-204.

37 Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947*, 31-50.

Army's troop movements in Tibet suggested that China considered opening a second front against India.³⁸ While the war came to an end before China's overt intervention, Indian strategists had to consider the possibility of a two-front war involving China and Pakistan from 1965 onwards.

India and Southeast Asia in the 1960s

While India and Indonesia had enjoyed close relations in the 1950s, their differences grew more pronounced in the 1960s due to a number of related factors, particularly India's low-key support for Indonesia's territorial claims over West Irian/Papua, and the two countries' different positions in the non-alignment movement.³⁹ Indonesia received support from China for its revolutionary ideology during this period and maintained strict neutrality during the 1962 Sino-Indian war. Later, during the 1965 India-Pakistan War, Indonesia threatened to open another front against India by attacking the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.⁴⁰ An important reason for Indonesia's hostility in this situation was that India was critical of Indonesia's policy of *Konfrontasi* towards Malaysia. In fact, a mob related to Indonesian communist groups sacked the Indian embassy in Jakarta in 1965.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the United States became increasingly embroiled in the Vietnam War. India was "opposed to the Western cause in Vietnam", calculating that it could thereby undermine the Cold War system of rival military blocs in its neighborhood.⁴² India's vociferous opposition to American involvement in Vietnam created difficulties in its relations with a number of pro-Western states in Southeast Asia that had formed a regional grouping, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in 1967.⁴³ Notably, India did not receive an invitation to join ASEAN (contrary to the widely held but erroneous belief that

38 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 203.

39 Ramachandran, "India-Indonesia Relations - 1947-1975." Quoted in Subrahmanyam, *Self-Reliance and National Reliance*, 147-158.

40 Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia: Indian Perceptions and Policies*, 41.

41 Ramachandran, "India-Indonesia Relations," 164.

42 Thakur, "India's Vietnam Policy, 1946-1979," 957-976; Lawrence, "The Limits of Peacemaking: India and the Vietnam War, 1962-67."

43 ASEAN's initial members included Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. Of these, Thailand and the Philippines were close allies of the United States while Malaysia and Singapore had a western orientation, first through the 1957 Anglo-Malaya Defence Agreement that eventually gave way to the Five Power Defence Agreement in 1971. (The five powers included Britain, Australia and New Zealand in addition to Malaysia and Singapore). See Leifer, "Conflict and Regional Order in Southeast Asia."

India was invited to join but had declined to do so)⁴⁴ and was disappointed about this lack of integration.⁴⁵ However, to a significant extent it was New Delhi's fault for sending mixed (or at least unclear) messages to the ASEAN states. In the late 1960s, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suggested the establishment of a regional grouping in Asia, a suggestion which sounded remarkably similar to the Asian collective security system proposed by the former Soviet Union.⁴⁶ India's Minister of External Affairs, Mohammedali Chagla, had propagated the idea of such a "Council of Asia" during his Southeast Asian tour in 1967, too. Gandhi presented the idea to Kuala Lumpur during her 1968 visit to Malaysia. Understandably, many Southeast Asians thought that India was undermining ASEAN by promoting an alternative.⁴⁷ Given India's problems with Indonesia, it seems quite possible that Indonesia wanted to keep India away from the grouping in Southeast Asia.

However, Singapore was (and continues to remain) a champion of India's involvement in the strategic architecture of this region. In the immediate aftermath of China's first nuclear test, Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, urged India to conduct a nuclear test to counter-balance Chinese power in the region.⁴⁸ In the second half of the 1960s, Lee had asked India to train and equip the military of his new city-state, which had been born in 1965.⁴⁹ Lee added that he would welcome an Indian naval presence in Southeast Asia.⁵⁰ Furthermore, prior to his first official visit to India, Lee is reported to have urged India to adopt an "Asian Monroe Doctrine" in order to prevent "poaching" in Asia.⁵¹ However, after suffering a military debacle at the hands of China in 1962 and having fought a major war with Pakistan in 1965, New Delhi did not respond to Singapore's request for military assistance. India was neither economically strong nor militarily powerful enough to implement its own version of the Monroe Doctrine in Asia of which Nehru had spoken at the dawn of India's independence.

44 For example, see Kaul, "ASEAN-India Relations during the Cold War," 55.

45 Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia*, 11.

46 Sridharan, *The ASEAN Region in India's Foreign Policy*, 69-76.

47 Kaul, "ASEAN-India Relations During the Cold War." Quoted in Grare and Mattoo, *India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy*, 55.

48 Ghoshal, "India and Southeast Asia: Prospects and Problems." Quoted in Ghoshal, *India and Southeast Asia: Challenges and Opportunities*, 96.

49 Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore*, 11. Also see Suryanarayan, "Looking Ahead: India and Southeast Asia in the 1990s, New Perspectives, New Challenges," quoted in Ghoshal, *India and Southeast Asia*, 16.

50 Ghoshal, "India and Southeast Asia," 96.

51 Quoted in Dutt, *India's Foreign Policy*, 277-278.

Changing Geopolitical Alignments

As noted earlier, Western military assistance to India came to an end with the onset of the 1965 India-Pakistan War. However, India needed military assistance from the great powers in the face of the Chinese challenge, especially given the possibility of a two-front scenario involving China and Pakistan. It was under these conditions that India turned to the Soviet Union. This decision was taken in spite of the fact that Indian military hardware was primarily of Western (European) origin heretofore, and that its military doctrine was influenced by the West due to the British colonial legacy. The Sino-Soviet split that had become apparent by this time paved the way for New Delhi's partnership with Moscow.⁵²

The Soviet Union offered India advanced technology under favorable terms to New Delhi. It offered India technology through licensed production, agreed to payments under barter arrangements (principally through commodities), provided New Delhi with cheap long-term credit agreements to pay for these systems, and entered into rupee-based trade arrangements, manipulating the rupee-ruble exchange rate to allow favorable trade balances for India.⁵³ Soviet-Indian cooperation culminated in the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation, which was signed on the eve of the Bangladesh War.⁵⁴

In the meantime, in an effort to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet split, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to China in 1971, having used Pakistan as a conduit to (tacitly) ally with Beijing in an attempt to shift the balance of power in the world.⁵⁵ During the 1971 Bangladesh War, the United States also gave China its consent to attack India if New Delhi escalated the war in West Pakistan.⁵⁶ The United States also dispatched a US Navy battle group, the *USS Enterprise* (which strategists in New Delhi believed to carry nuclear arms) to the Bay of Bengal to warn India against escalating the war in the west. The dispatch of the *USS Enterprise* was also meant as a signal to the Soviet Union to desist from taking military action against China in the event of a Chinese attack on India.⁵⁷ While China provided limited economic and military assistance to Pakistan, its level of involvement in 1971 was much lower than in 1965. India succeeded in the vivisection of Pakistan (and the creation of Bangladesh), and emerged as the predominant military power in South Asia. This pattern of

52 Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split, 1956-1966: Cold War in the Communist World*.

53 Mehrotra, *India and the Soviet Union: Trade and Technology Transfer*.

54 See Racioppi, *Soviet Policy Towards South Asia since 1970*.

55 Goh, *Constructing the US Rapprochement with China, 1961-1974: From 'Red Menace' to 'Tacit Ally'*.

56 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 207-215.

57 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 322.

American and Chinese alignment (together with Pakistan) against Indian (and Soviet) interests continued through the 1970s and the early 1980s.

In the meantime, Britain had announced its decision to withdraw its naval power from “east of the Suez” in 1967.⁵⁸ The Indian Navy announced its intention to assume the functions of the British Navy after the latter’s withdrawal from the region.⁵⁹ At the time, India neither had the resources nor the vision to fill such a role. Nevertheless, New Delhi’s announcement created suspicions about India’s policy towards Southeast Asia in Indonesia.⁶⁰ Along with the withdrawal of the British forces came the enunciation of the so-called Guam Doctrine by US President Richard Nixon. While the doctrine lacked a precise definition, the United States was announcing its intention to not get militarily involved on the Asian mainland.⁶¹

Even before Southeast Asia could come to terms with the meaning of Western disengagement from the region, India signed the 1971 treaty with the former Soviet Union. India had emerged as the pre-eminent power in South Asia with the dismemberment of Pakistan, and to some extent also regained its status as a military power that it had lost after 1962. However, the Southeast Asian states again became suspicious of India’s designs for the region, as they saw Soviet power lurking behind India’s new status at a time when the Western powers were disengaging from the region.⁶² The strategic environment in Southeast Asia became more complicated with Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s.

The Strengthening of the Sino-Pakistani Strategic Nexus

The 1971 war between India and Pakistan and the Indian military’s dismemberment of the eastern wing of Pakistan through the creation of Bangladesh only heightened Pakistan’s threat perception vis-à-vis India. In March 1972, Pakistan’s President, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, initiated the country’s nuclear weapons program in order to meet what Pakistan perceived as an existential security threat from India.⁶³ It was under these conditions that Bhutto sought help from China. While the genesis of the Sino-Pakistani nuclear relationship remains un-

58 By 1974, all of Britain’s deployments east of the Suez (with the exception of Hong Kong) were withdrawn.

59 This decision was announced in 1969. See Thomas, “The Indian Navy in the Seventies,” 500-518.

60 Dipoyudo, “Indonesia-India Bilateral Relations,” 509-523.

61 See Girling, “The Guam Doctrine,” 48-62.

62 Gupta, “Waiting for India: India’s Role as a Regional Power,” 171-184.

63 Ahmed, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices,” 183.

known, it is widely believed that it began in the 1970s – perhaps after India’s 1974 nuclear test – during the tenure of Bhutto.⁶⁴ China had tried to build up Pakistan to militarily balance India’s power soon after the 1962 Sino-Indian war.

Similarly, China’s proliferation of strategic technologies to Pakistan was a part of a larger strategy to contain India in South Asia by practicing balance of power politics.⁶⁵ It has been shown that arguments based on bureaucratic politics or commercial gains cannot explain the persistence with which a centralized political system like China has transferred these technologies to Pakistan over a long period of time.⁶⁶ China is believed to have not only sent missile technologies and components to Pakistan but also fissile material and tested nuclear war-head designs.⁶⁷

The Sino-Pakistani nuclear and strategic relationship remained strong until the end of the Cold War. In the midst of the 1990 India-Pakistan nuclear crisis, Chinese Defense Minister Qin Qiwei led a delegation to Pakistan and assured Islamabad that the Chinese government would “never” change its policy of “supporting the Pakistani government, people, and armed forces in safeguarding their state sovereignty and territorial integrity, no matter how the international situation changes.”⁶⁸ While it is true that China has become more cautious in its nuclear and missile assistance to Pakistan since the mid-1990s, especially after signing the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992, it should be noted that China completely transformed the strategic balance in the subcontinent by that time as a result of the proliferation of its strategic technologies to Pakistan.⁶⁹

Moreover, China had begun to construct a road through the Karakoram mountain range, a direct land-route which connected China’s Xinjiang province with Pakistan’s Northern Areas, soon after the 1962 Sino-Indian war and the 1963 Sino-Pakistani border agreement. In 1978, China and Pakistan formally announced the opening of the Karakoram Highway linking the two countries

64 Paul, “The Enduring Sino-Pakistani Nuclear/Missile Relationship and the Balance of Power Logic,” 4.

65 Paul, “Chinese-Pakistani Nuclear/Missile Ties and the Balance of Power.” Similarly, Bernier has argued that China’s proliferation of strategic technologies to states such as North Korea, Iran, Libya, Syria, and Pakistan is a part of China’s strategy to use these states as “strategic proxies” in order to further its “geopolitical goals.” See Bernier, “Asia’s Shifting Strategic Landscape: China’s Strategic Proxies,” 629-643.

66 Paul, “Chinese-Pakistani Nuclear/Missile Ties and the Balance of Power.”

67 Malik, “Nuclear Proliferation in Asia: The China Factor,” 31-41.

68 Quoted in Garver, “China’s Kashmir Policies,” 9.

69 According to many analysts, Pakistan is believed to have had at least one unassembled nuclear weapon by June 1989. See Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, 303.

across their Himalayan borderlands. This highway was of great strategic value. First, it allowed China “to give military aid to Pakistan”, as Li Xiannian, Deputy Premier of China stated when the highway was completed.⁷⁰ Second, by providing China with access to the Gilgit region in Pakistan’s Northern Areas, it allowed China to monitor Indian attempts to cut the lines of communication between Xinjiang and Tibet through the Aksai Chin region.⁷¹ The Aksai Chin region (approximately 38,000 square kilometers), an extension of the Tibetan plateau, is a disputed region between India and China. The Chinese had started building a road via this region to connect Tibet with Xinjiang soon after the emergence of the People’s Republic in 1949. Given the poor connection between Tibet and China, control over this road and the Aksai Chin region was very important for China to consolidate its rule in Tibet.⁷² Third, the Karakoram Highway helped integrate the Northern Areas with the rest of Pakistan. When Pakistan (and India) became independent in 1947, the Northern Areas were physically, economically, and politically cut off from the rest of Pakistan.⁷³ More importantly, India considered the Northern Areas to be a part of Jammu and Kashmir, a state disputed between the two South Asian rivals. By building the highway, China demonstrated its support for Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. Finally, China had an interest in ensuring that the Northern Areas remained part of Pakistan because the only land borders Pakistan shared with China ran between the Northern Areas and Xinjiang. Even today, the highway possesses strategic importance. According to several reports, a large number of Chinese soldiers are believed to be stationed in the Northern Areas on a long-term basis. Furthermore, there are plans to link the Karakoram Highway to the port of Gwadar at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, thereby giving China an alternative route to access energy resources from the Middle East.⁷⁴

The Slow Road to Sino-Indian Rapprochement

Sino-Indian relations remained tense throughout the 1960s. The militaries of the two countries briefly clashed near the Nathu La and Cho La passes in the central sector of their disputed border in 1967, a conflict during which several dozen

70 Quoted in Isphani, *Roads and Rivals: The Political Uses of Access in the Borderlands of Asia*, 200.

71 Isphani, *Roads and Rivals*, 205-6.

72 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 80-88.

73 Isphani, “Roads and Rivals,” 194.

74 Harrison, “China’s Discreet Hold on Pakistan’s Northern Borderlands.” Also see Gupta, “Army passes intel to Govt: PLA men at pass linking PoK to China.”

soldiers on both sides were killed.⁷⁵ Soon thereafter, China initiated the first step to improve relations between the two countries in 1970: Mao Zedong approached Brajesh Mishra, the Indian charge d'affaires, in Beijing, and greeted him warmly at a reception. The reason for China's interest in improving relations with India was the bitter border war China had fought with the Soviet Union a year earlier.⁷⁶ Beijing wanted to avoid the hostility of two large powers on both its northern and southern borders. However, the Sino-US rapprochement (via Pakistan), the 1971 Indo-Soviet treaty, and the 1971 Bangladesh War prevented any improvement in bilateral relations.

In 1974, India demonstrated its nuclear abilities by conducting a nuclear test which was dubbed a "peaceful nuclear explosion". As noted earlier, India had genuine security concerns including China's nuclear capabilities, the emerging Sino-Pakistani entente, and even a perceived nuclear threat from the United States. The Chinese, who had begun to covertly assist the Pakistani nuclear program in the 1970s, were critical of India's nuclear test and accused New Delhi of trying to scare its neighboring countries. The Chinese also believed (erroneously) that India had become nuclear with Soviet help.⁷⁷

Relations between India and China further deteriorated after India absorbed Sikkim into the Indian Union in 1975.⁷⁸ Sandwiched between India and Tibet, Sikkim had been a protectorate of India since the country's independence in 1947. In an attempt to reduce political tensions with Beijing, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi restored full diplomatic relations with China in 1976. India and China had withdrawn their ambassadors after the 1962 war, but diplomatic relations were never fully severed.

When Mao passed away in 1976 and Indira Gandhi was ousted in the 1977 general elections, the situation was open to change. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Foreign Minister of the new Janata Party coalition government, visited China in 1979 in an attempt to improve ties. Vajpayee was the most senior Indian dignitary to visit China since Vice-President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's visit to Beijing in 1958. However, during Vajpayee's visit, China attacked Vietnam, which was India's communist friend in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping spoke of teaching Vietnam a "lesson" just as China had done to India in 1962. As a consequence, Vajpayee cut short his visit and returned to India.

75 See Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*, 197-9.

76 Ganguly, "Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security," 120.

77 On the reactions of the Chinese vice-premier Deng Xiaoping to India's 1974 nuclear test, see Sharma, *India-China Relations, 1972-1991*, Part II, 128-9.

78 Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 170-175.

In 1980, Deng reiterated Zhou Enlai's 1960 proposal of an east-west swap to settle the territorial dispute between the two countries.⁷⁹ China was eager to overcome its border disputes in order to focus on its domestic economic development. However, just as in 1960, China's offer for a swap was informal. Moreover, India was again not interested in the Chinese proposal to swap territories.⁸⁰ The Chinese proposal was therefore withdrawn in 1985. Yet there were signs of improvement nonetheless. China's foreign minister Huang Hua paid a return visit to India in 1981. The Chinese agreed to open two ancient Hindu pilgrimage sites in Tibet – Kailash and Mansarovar – to win public support with the Indian public. After Huang's visit, the two sides began border talks in December 1981. China agreed to discuss the border issue sector by sector, which New Delhi preferred (as opposed to a package deal favored by Beijing). In turn, India agreed to begin negotiations without demanding the Chinese vacate all territory claimed by India.⁸¹

Yet a number of developments in the 1980s complicated Sino-Indian relations once again. In 1984, Indian soldiers seized key positions in the Siachen Glacier, a disputed region between India and Pakistan, which worried Chinese strategists.⁸² It was noted earlier that the Karakoram Highway had strengthened China's military position vis-à-vis India in the western sector. However, the Indian position in Siachen now gave India the ability to isolate Pakistan from mainland China "within a few hours, with little or no warning."⁸³ Thus, by 1984, India was able to reverse some of the negative strategic fallout from the Karakoram Highway for its own security.

Two years later, in December 1986, India granted full statehood to Arunachal Pradesh (the region in the eastern sector that was claimed by China). Although this step was simply a "logical evolution of [Indian] administrative proc-

79 The basic premise was that the territorial dispute could be settled if India dropped its claim to the Aksai Chin region in the western sector which was under Chinese control. In return, the Chinese would drop their claim on the region now known as Arunachal Pradesh which was under Indian administration.

80 For an explanation of India and Chinese positions on this issue, see Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 100-6.

81 Ganguly, "The Sino-Indian Border Talks, 1981-1989: A View from New Delhi," *Asian Survey* Volume 29, Number 12 (December 1989), 1126. Eight rounds of talks were held between 1981 and 1988 with the two sides discussing the "basic principles" to settle their border dispute as well as the "situation on the ground."

82 On the Chinese dimension in Siachen, see Raghavan, *Conflict without End*, 19-28.

83 Tan Eng Bok, "How Does the PLA Cope with 'Regional Conflict' and 'Local War'?" Quoted in Yang, *China's Military: The PLA in 1990/91*, 151.

ess,” the Chinese saw it as a “possible legal erosion to their claim.”⁸⁴ Soon thereafter, Sino-Indian forces clashed briefly in 1986 in the Sumdorong Chu Valley of Arunachal Pradesh. The mobilization of forces by both sides over the next one year or so sparked “fears of a second China-India war.”⁸⁵

In 1986-87, under the leadership of the maverick Indian General K Sundarji, India launched an exercise in armed diplomacy that combined air and land-based operations along the disputed eastern border with China. Code-named Operation Chequerboard, its mission was to test China’s response as well as that of the United States and the Soviet Union. The mock exercise, which simulated a limited war in the McMahon Line area, heightened tensions along the Sino-Indian border, with close to 400,000 troops of both the sides stationed along this border at its peak.⁸⁶ However, the exercise was quickly terminated under mounting international pressure.⁸⁷ By then, the Indian air force had estimated that its killing ratio in a conflict with China in this region was ten to one in India’s favor.⁸⁸ The overall results of this exercise convinced the Indian government “of its capability to successfully decide any regional confrontation” with China.⁸⁹

While India clearly had robust military capabilities by the late 1980s (especially when compared to 1962) and could withstand a Chinese military attack, India had no clear political and military objectives as far as the offensive use of force against China was concerned. It was clear to India’s decision makers that India could not unilaterally use its armed forces to settle the boundary issue with China or to guarantee Tibetan autonomy.⁹⁰ However, India’s strong military capabilities meant that India extended a warm hand to China from what it perceived to be a position of military strength. The late 1980s further saw the emergence of India as a regional power with military interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.⁹¹

At the same time, Operation Brasstacks had caused a serious war scare with Pakistan. India’s military resources were seriously stretched and it made sense

84 Ganguly, “The Sino-Indian Border Talks, 1981-1989: A View from New Delhi,” 1130-1.

85 Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 199.

86 Hazarika, “India and China cite each other for massing troops in the Himalayas.”

87 Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 148.

88 Tan Eng Bok, “How Does the PLA Cope with ‘Regional Conflict’ and ‘Local War’?,” 150.

89 Tan Eng Bok, “How Does the PLA Cope with ‘Regional Conflict’ and ‘Local War’?,” 151.

90 Hussain, “India’s China Policy: Putting Politics in Command.” Quoted in Kumar, *Yearbook on India’s Foreign Policy*, 1989.

91 Hagerty, “India’s Regional Security Doctrine.”

to de-escalate the Sino-Indian rivalry, especially since it did not offer a military solution. Another important reason why India decided to de-escalate its rivalry with China seems to have been a consequence of the loss of unqualified Soviet support that it had received in its relations with China. The loss of Soviet support became apparent during the 1986 Sumdorong Chu incident mentioned above, about which the Soviet press made absolutely no statement.⁹² Later, when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev travelled to India in 1986, he refused to side with India in its conflict with China.⁹³ Finally, during his visit to Delhi a month before Rajiv Gandhi's trip to China in 1988, Gorbachev stressed the common interests of the three states.⁹⁴ This was the clearest sign that India was losing the strong diplomatic and military support that it had received from the Soviets since 1971 in New Delhi's competition with Beijing.

Those years were also the period of Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Soviet force reductions along the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian frontiers, the acceptance by the Soviets of the main channel of the Amur and Ussuri rivers as the demarcation line for the Sino-Soviet boundary, and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the late 1980s led to a major thaw in Sino-Soviet relations. China was also concerned with other security threats in the late 1980s. China had engaged in some naval clashes with the Vietnamese over the Spratly Islands in 1988.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the democratization of Taiwan from 1987 onwards was a serious concern for the Chinese. Taiwan democratized under a tacit security guarantee by Washington in an attempt to make itself a more attractive partner of the United States (and the Western world).⁹⁶ Finally, India did not intervene in the crisis in Tibet which began in late 1987.⁹⁷ Given China's other pre-occupations, the Chinese side decided in favor of de-escalation as well.

The most visible symbol of Sino-Indian rapprochement was Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's trip to China in December 1988, the first such visit made by either side in more than three decades. Gandhi's trip broke the impasse that had been plaguing their relations since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and led the top leadership of the two sides to come to an understanding that Sino-Indian trade and commercial relations could be improved before their border issue was resolved.⁹⁸

92 Garver, "The Indian Factor in Recent Sino-Soviet Relations," 80.

93 Garver, "The Indian Factor in Recent Sino-Soviet Relations," 81.

94 Mansingh and Levine, "China and India: Moving Beyond Confrontation," 40.

95 Kivimäki, "'Reason' and 'Power' in Territorial Disputes: The South China Sea."

96 Cheng, "Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan."

97 Pardesi, "Instability in Tibet and the Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry: Do Domestic Politics Matter?"

98 Ghosh, "Dynamics of India-China Normalisation."

The visit also led to the creation of the Joint Working Group (JWG) that was to develop a resolution of the border dispute. Headed by the Indian Foreign Secretary and the Chinese Foreign Vice Minister, the JWG was supposed to alternately meet in Beijing and New Delhi every six months.⁹⁹ Although the meetings did not lead to any breakthrough on the vexed Sino-Indian border issue, they helped to maintain a steady and positive momentum in China's and India's bilateral relations. They also provided the framework for the 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility and the 1996 Agreement on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). As per these agreements, the two sides have agreed not to use force against each other to settle their border dispute. They have also established hotlines between border troop commanders and agreed to limit and reduce the size of their forces along specific regions along their border. Finally, India and China have agreed to avoid large-scale military exercises involving more than one division (15,000 troops) along their border, while providing prior notification of exercises involving more than one brigade (5,000 troops).¹⁰⁰

Strategic Divergence between India and Southeast Asia

In the aftermath of the 1971 Bangladesh War, India, the pre-eminent regional power in the subcontinent, was unable to "look east" towards Southeast Asia. The "oil shocks" of the 1970s and the economic boom in the Gulf that followed it caused India to "look west" towards the oil-rich countries of West Asia (or the Middle East).¹⁰¹ India was also concerned about the efforts of Iran to play the role of a regional power in South Asia. In 1972, the Shah of Iran had declared that any attack on Pakistan would be tantamount to an attack on Iran, and that Tehran was committed to the territorial integrity of Pakistan.¹⁰² These international developments together with India's position on the Vietnam War prevented New Delhi from engaging Southeast Asia in any meaningful sense throughout the 1970s.

India's muted response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the recognition by New Delhi of the Heng Samrin government in Kampuchea (Cambodia) after Vietnam invaded that country further alienated India from Southeast Asia. The Kampuchean case in particular was a more serious concern for ASEAN countries which were then worried about Vietnam's military power

99 On the formation of the JWG, see Mansingh, "India-China Relations in the Post-Cold War Era," 289-293. The JWG met fourteen times between 1989 and 2002.

100 Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India: Cooperation or Conflict?*, 124-6.

101 Thomas, "Energy Politics and Indian Security."

102 On Iran's efforts to position itself as a South Asian power, see Gupta, "Waiting for India," 178-180.

(and its links with the former Soviet Union).¹⁰³ However, India sought to play an active diplomatic role between the Indo-Chinese countries and ASEAN during the Kampuchean crisis. Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea was followed by China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979.¹⁰⁴ "Gandhi realized that if India were to become the paramount power in South Asia it would have to prevent a Chinese advance into Southeast Asia."¹⁰⁵ Consequently, Gandhi recognized the Heng Samrin government in opposition to Beijing's preference for its Khmer Rouge clients.

After Rajiv Gandhi became Indian Prime Minister, New Delhi sought to play the role of an "honest broker" between Vietnam and ASEAN.¹⁰⁶ In January 1987, Vietnam's position was comprehensively formulated for the first time and then communicated to the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Natwar Singh, for transmission to ASEAN. In March, April and July 1987, Singh visited all six ASEAN states and the three Indo-Chinese countries. India also made it clear that it would like to be one of the guarantors of an international agreement on Kampuchea.¹⁰⁷ India became a member of the 1989 Paris Accords on Cambodia.

While India was trying to raise its diplomatic profile in Southeast Asia, the rapid build-up of India's naval and military power in the 1980s, and its development of a naval (and a possible air base) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands at the mouth of the Straits of Malacca, emerged as a major cause of concern for the Southeast Asian states.¹⁰⁸ India had received an offer for a second aircraft

103 Vietnam had launched an invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978 and had ousted the government of the Khmer Rouge. The Heng Samrin regime installed by Vietnam was recognized by Indira Gandhi's government in India in 1980. For details, see Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia*, 53-71.

104 See Buszynski, "Vietnam Confronts China," 829-843. Also see Zhang, "China's 1979 War with Vietnam: A Reassessment."

105 Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia*, 56.

106 Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia*, 59.

107 Thakur, *The Politics and Economics of India's Foreign Policy*, 252. India sent military contingents to Cambodia in 1991 as a part of both the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) as well as the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). In addition to these, India also sent a medical battalion to Cambodia as a part of UNTAC. Finally, India was chosen to be the co-chair of the Control Commission to assist UNTAC in implementing the peace accords.

108 See Naidu, "The Indian Navy and Southeast Asia," 72-85. India had been planning to upgrade its military facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands since 1972. The 1980s witnessed significant infrastructure building on what was then known as FORTAN or Fortress Andaman and Nicobar. See Gordon, *India's Rise to Power in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, 293-295.

carrier from Britain in 1985.¹⁰⁹ From 1988 to 1991, India leased a nuclear powered cruise missile submarine from the Soviet Union.¹¹⁰ The late 1980s further saw the emergence of India as a regional power with military interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.¹¹¹ There were concerns in many Southeast Asian states with significant Indian minorities that India might engage in gunboat diplomacy if ethnic Indians in that region were to be harmed or mistreated.¹¹² It was widely believed towards the end of the 1980s that India was transforming into “a regional superpower” and would emerge as “a global military power.”¹¹³

Yet on the whole, India was at best a marginal player in Southeast Asia throughout this period. At worst, India created geopolitical tensions in Southeast Asia as a consequence of its alignment with the former Soviet Union. At times, Southeast Asian states perceived military threats from India. The Cold War was a period of “missed opportunities, mistrust, misperceptions, and bungling diplomacy”¹¹⁴ in Indo-ASEAN relations, as India lacked an overall policy towards ASEAN as a grouping or towards the Southeast Asian region on the whole. The only notable success of Indian policy towards Southeast Asia was a result of the diplomatic role that New Delhi played during the Kampuchean crisis. India’s relations with Southeast Asia began to improve only after the end of the Cold War (and the implosion of the former Soviet Union) and with India’s economic reforms, which set in almost simultaneously. India immediately launched a formal “look east” policy to engage this economically dynamic region.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

India’s defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian war made it a marginal player in Asia’s strategic affairs for the rest of the Cold War. The Sino-Pakistani entente which emerged soon after 1962 ensured that India remained merely a South Asian player even as Nehru had tried to position India as the leading Asian power soon after independence in 1947. India’s subsequent focus on its northwestern border

109 Prakash, “India’s Quest for an Indigenous Aircraft Carrier,” 50-52.

110 “Submarine Proliferation: India, Current Capabilities,” Nuclear Threat Initiative, Accessed on June 14, 2008. <http://www.nti.org/db/submarines/india/index.html>.

111 On India’s military intervention in Sri Lanka and Maldives with an emphasis on the role of the navy, see Roy-Chaudhury, *Sea Power and Indian Security*, 134-146.

112 However, India’s helplessness in responding to the mistreatment of Indians in Fiji in 1987 reassured Southeast Asian states to some extent. Naidu, “The Indian Navy and Southeast Asia,” 82.

113 Munro, “India: The Awakening of an Asian Power.”

114 Kaul, “ASEAN-India Relations during the Cold War,” 62.

115 Pardesi, “Southeast Asia in Indian Foreign Policy: Positioning India as a Major Power in Asia.” Quoted in *India’s Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect*.

with Pakistan and its northern and northeastern borders with China meant that India was unable to “look east” even after the rapid take off of the East Asian “tiger economies” from the 1970s onwards. Military defeat at the hands of China also reduced the perception of India as a regional balance to Chinese power in Southeast Asia. India’s lackluster economic performance and its autarkic policies further widened the gap between India and Southeast Asia. New Delhi’s criticism of the United States in Vietnam and its 1971 treaty with the former Soviet Union raised suspicions about India’s intentions in Asia. Finally, India’s rapid military build-up with Soviet assistance alarmed the Southeast Asian states in the 1980s. However, it was India’s growing military capabilities which gave New Delhi the self-confidence to mend ties with Beijing at the time of the Sino-Soviet rapprochement just before the end of the Cold War. Finally, the end of the Cold War and the opening up of the Indian economy paved the way for India to reach out to Southeast Asia again.

Muslims in India: Secularism and its International Preconditions

William Gould

Introduction

One of the greatest debates within the Islamic world from the late 19th century to the present, has been how Muslims might navigate the line between the promotion of their communities' own vision of traditional values and culture, and 'modernity'. The crucial context to this debate has been the influence of 'Western' ideas in Islamic societies, principally around the organization of the state and its relationship to established religion. And it is precisely in those areas of the world in which European states historically exercised forms of influence, either formally as imperial powers, or more informally via trade and commercial dominance, that the debate has been most vigorously pursued. Some of the most significant 'foreign imports' for such societies were governmental and societal structures, particularly those which allowed colonial powers to operate most effectively in multi-ethnic contexts: principally, the concept of the secular state as a governmental form, and secularism as a political ideology. Even more forcefully, secularism was championed by movements directly opposing colonial powers, as a form of 'modern' political organization that allowed for the mobilization of 'national' institutions.

Discussions about modernity and secularism in Islamic societies therefore developed from attempts to define society in relation to a (sometimes colonial) foreign other: they related to the self-perception of communities in relation to external ideas about political organization, and in the context of a global Islamic *umma* (community). Such discussions also took place within the context of European imperial networks. Fundamental in the case of India was the figure of Sayed Ahmed Khan, the great founder of the Aligarh Anglo-Oriental College in the late nineteenth century, which later became the centre of subsequent Muslim religio-political mobilization. Sayed Ahmed Khan argued (before the term 'secularism' had any currency) that education in Persian or Arabic for most Muslims should not be focussed solely on the acquisition of religious texts, but be a means to qualify for official employment, as provided by the colonial state in India. For him, Islamic theological education could be transformed by bringing more Muslims into contact with western institutions and by squaring the scriptural authorities of Islam with what he saw as the strengths of 'western' rationalism. This was about the fulfilment of Islamic society at the forefront of

world civilisation: to claim for Islam the advances of science.¹ A later, clearer attempt to promote secularism directly, not just as a principle within education, but as an ideal of governance within a Muslim society, in this case Egypt, was that of Shaykh Ali Abd al-Raziq, in his *al-Islam wa 'Usul al-Hukm*, published in 1925. This stated that Islam was a religion, not a state, or a spiritual edifice rather than a political institution.²

This thesis led Abd al-Raziq to be defrocked by the Azharite Committee of Ulema. And sadly, the reigniting of his discussion in modern times has led to the polarization of debate on secularism in some parts of the Islamic world, in which Islamists have turned the term into a form of opprobrium, championing instead a 'return to Islam', against an equally vociferous secularist position.³ However, this essay will argue that the specific development of secularism in other parts of the Islamic world was quite different and did not divide along such binaries. In India, where Muslims were in a powerful minority, highly creative and integrative forms of secularism developed. These were both fragile, but also potentially effective in protecting freedom of religion for minorities in India. In more theoretical ways though, what happened to secularism in India can be generalized to other Islamic contexts. Tracing the histories of these forms of secularism potentially shifts our notion of what secularism and the secular state are: Abd al-Raziq's arguments highlighted a particular trend in the development of the idea of the secular state, where such ideas took root in a late colonial or postcolonial context. In British occupied Egypt, religion and politics were not easily separated, yet somehow secularism as a concept could still exist. As one scholar of contemporary Egypt has suggested, the precariousness of secularism's categories were at the root of secular power in these states.⁴ As we will see below, some of these same features of fragility and uncertainty, working as fundamental features, characterized secularism and the secular state in India.

At the broadest level, the establishment of a secular state in India appeared to be the outcome of a straightforward ideological battle. Crucial for India was the nature of its transition to independence, involving the creation of a separate 'Muslim' state (Pakistan), and a long-standing political conflict between advocates of unitary nationalism and Muslim separatism. But this division and separation between 'Muslim' Pakistan and 'secular', Congress dominated India obscured more complex realities. To trace the roots of discussions about the quality of Indian secularism we need to go back to the late nineteenth century. In In-

1 Lelyveld, "Disenchantment at Aligarh," 85-102.

2 Najjar, "The Debate on Islam and Secularism in Egypt."

3 Najjar, "The Debate on Islam and Secularism in Egypt," 1-2.

4 Agrama, "Secularism, Sovereignty, Indeterminacy," 495-523.

dia too, politics was infused with religion, not only because of the existence of a highly heterogeneous Muslim minority, but also because of the ideological and political debates that revolved around 'Hinduism' from that time. Hand in hand with the growth of institutional and mass anti-colonial nationalism went public pronouncements about the inter-relationship between religious community and national community. From the 1880s and 1890s, via the movements driven by the likes of B.G. Tilak, Aurobindo, Madan Mohan Malaviya and later in the *swadeshi* movement of 1905-8, large numbers were mobilized around religious community themes, or during festivals. In contrast, via different institutions and importantly with a global outlook, a powerful Muslim minority (which formed majorities in the north east and north west) discussed how their religion related to political activity. And this was a Muslim population of global importance both then and today. According to the 2001 census, the Muslim population in India numbered around 160 million, or around 13.4% of the total population, which makes India's the third largest Muslim population after Indonesia and Pakistan.

Late colonial debates about whether or not the Indian state should be secular were certainly very different to the experience of secularization in Europe which accompanied the gradual separation of church and state. Indian secularism was never conceptualized along European lines and never could be, not least because there is not (and never was) an 'established' religious tradition in the subcontinent. In practical terms too, it is extremely difficult to separate out the 'religious' from 'non religious' practices of politics, and so in India, the secularism of particular institutions or political and constitutional structures did not necessarily (or even very commonly) mean that society too, would be 'secularized'.⁵ In this sense, from its very earliest articulations in Indian politics in the late colonial period, and in its implied effect within the Constitution of India, secularism in India could only ever imply the selected separation of religion from politics within specific institutions. Most importantly, it promoted the idea that the state would maintain equal distance from all traditions and that all would be equally tolerated.

This immediately threw up problems for the working of India's Constitution, and of its juridical and political systems. In the 1950 Constitution's fundamental rights of citizenship, all citizens are required to be treated equally, without reference to birth, gender or religious affinity. Yet, the Constitution does require the state, in articles 15 and 17, to recognize and promote the special interests of particular 'schedules' of disadvantaged castes.⁶ And since these sched-

5 Bhargava, "What is Secularism For?," 488-91.

6 Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India*, 268.

ules are based on older colonial notions of caste, which brought into consideration religious notions of purity and pollution, the state is effectively distinguishing between citizens on religious lines. For example, the state is empowered to grant Dalits full access to Hindu religious institutions.⁷ Indian law, too, allows the application of different bodies of family law on the basis of religious communities, and in particular permits the working of Muslim Personal Law. This is despite the creation of a 'Hindu Code Bill' that made the variety of regional systems of personal law for 'Hindus', relating to marriage, divorce, succession and maintenance more uniform.

However, this does not mean that secularism did not have a powerful purpose in India, or was ultimately unworkable in Indian conditions. In fact, this paper will argue that Indian secularism's most important role has been in its intermittent, yet powerful symbolic (and sometimes real) protection of Indo-Islamic culture and society, and those of other minorities. Key to the working of the Indian secular state as far as the principal Muslim organizations were concerned was the continued recognition of the separate interests and rights of religious minorities, but within the existing constitutional and political framework of the democratic state. It has allowed India's Muslims, despite the history of religious community separatism implicit in the creation of Pakistan, to theoretically maintain their status as citizens, with all the constitutional rights and duties that entailed, while continuing to protect their own religious cultures and practices.

The problems then were not in the model of Indian secularism, or its institutional implications, but in the matter of its political and everyday application. Indian secularism emerged out of particularly unusual circumstances. It was first debated and defined at a time when a range of movements were building 'national' institutions and promoting ideas of national belonging, in a struggle to replace a foreign (itself secular) colonial power. In this sense, the debates about secularism were always wrapped up in larger political agendas of mobilizing (and in the same instance defining) Indian society. This was a practice which, in the face of the colonial state's focus on religious and caste identities as a fundamental facet of Indian society, often led to the more forceful articulation of religious community. Because anti-colonial struggle took place at a popular level, and involved mass mobilization, secularism could also mean a range of different things to different political ideologues. It was also highly differentiated in its application, being dependent on forms of mobilization and spatial levels of governance.

7 For some case studies of how this worked, see Gallanter, "Hinduism, Secularism, and the Indian Judiciary," 268-96.

There were, however, dominant voices in the debates about how far the state should interfere in the religious lives of India's subject-citizens. And quite common in the Congress in north India in the 1930s – the pre-eminent institution of anti-colonial nationalism – was the idea that secularism was anticipated by Hindu philosophy and social organization.⁸ These kinds of suggestions had a number of damaging implications. Firstly, they created ambiguities around the application of secularism within state institutions, which meant that there were often important dichotomies between the statement of state policy at a broad level, and its implementation on the ground.⁹ Some late twentieth century critiques of secularism as a product of western Enlightenment thinking, and therefore inapplicable to India, have tended to reinforce this ambiguity.¹⁰ Secondly, they tended to play into the hands of ideologues of the Hindu right, who naturally identify 'Hinduism' as the most 'catholic' religious tradition, containing within it principles of toleration. By extension, the Muslim community and Islam became the key agents of communal antagonism, leading one ideologue of the Hindu right to suggest that "Muslim communalism has now acquired a constitutional dignity by the term 'minority rights'".¹¹

In order to understand how and why, since the 1980s, scholars have written about a 'crisis of Indian secularism', we therefore need to consider the period of state transition between the 1930s and 1960s, and principally the political adjustments following partition. This will form section I) which follows. In section II) we will examine how, in fact, there was a great deal of potential within the somewhat ambiguous secularism established in India, for the protection of Muslim minorities. The success of India's Muslim communities in promoting Indo-Islamic culture as a core feature of India's national identity, is partly testament to the idea that, although fragile, secularism is not exclusively of value to western states. However, from the 1980s, the security of Muslim communities and organizations in India was disrupted as a result of internal and global changes. In theory, minorities' civic rights remained as they always had been. Yet public intellectuals and the media began to discuss the decline of secularism as a core Indian value – a mood that was essentially driven by the rise of the Hindu right. Section III) will explore this latter phenomenon and its effects on Muslims in India, with specific reference to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and its longer term implications.

8 Gould, Hindu nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India, 6-7.

9 Gould, "Contesting 'Secularism' in Colonial and Postcolonial North India," 481-494.

10 Madan, "Secularism in its Place," 747-59.

11 Sankhdher, *Secularism in India: Dilemmas and Challenges*, 146; Seshadri was at that time General Secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh See also in the same volume the contributions of Balraj Madhok, President of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh.