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# INDIA IN ASIA: THE NEXT DECADE

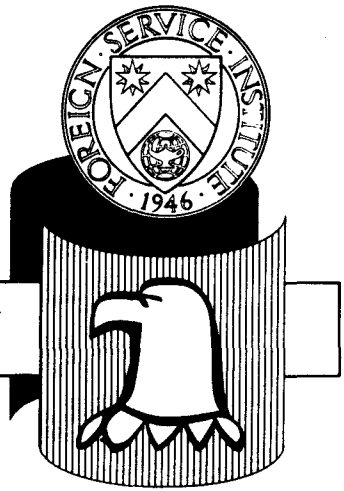
by Natale H. Bellocchi

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SEVENTEENTH SESSION

## SENIOR SEMINAR IN FOREIGN POLICY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



1974-75

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# INDIA IN ASIA: THE NEXT DECADE

Case Study by NATALE H. BELLOCCHI

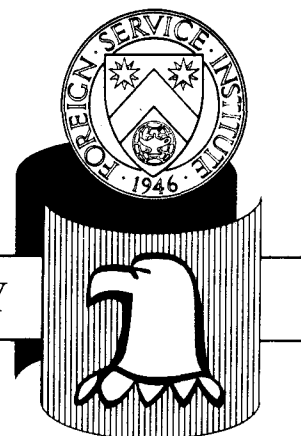
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AMBASSADOR JOHN F. ROOT  
COORDINATOR, SENIOR SEMINAR IN FOREIGN POLICY

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

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PREFACE

This paper was prepared from information gathered from books and publications, and from numerous reports in the files of the pertinent country offices in the Department of State and embassies visited. Most importantly, however, information was obtained from interviews with Country Officers in the Department of State, from officers in the embassies, and from talks with officials, journalists, and experts conducted in the course of a trip through Tehran, Islamabad, New Delhi, Katmandu, Dacca, Rangoon, Bangkok and Jakarta.

Information was given generously and with full candor by people who are considered experts in the subject matter. The writer, however, is not. This case study was undertaken as part of the Seventeenth Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy, and the main purpose was educational--to increase the writer's knowledge of an area in which he has not previously served. The time and expertise shared by all these experts in spite of this, therefore, is greatly appreciated.

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## SUMMARY

Before 1971 India's claim to hegemony in the subcontinent was more form than substance. Since that time, however, Pakistan has virtually been eliminated as a military threat, India has joined the nuclear club, and Sikkim has been absorbed. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Himalayan Kingdoms, while their bilateral relationships with India are not without important problems, still are dominated politically, militarily, and (except possibly for Sri Lanka) economically as well by India. Throughout the subcontinent there is a general acceptance of India as the dominant power of the area. Even in Pakistan there seems to be a pragmatic view of India's relative power, and the need for Pakistan to accommodate to it.

The 1971 war not only eliminated any military threat from India's subcontinent neighbor, but it also eliminated any leverage India's troubles with Pakistan gave to other neighbors in the region. The explosion by India of a nuclear device, with the passage of time, is seen to have enhanced India's prestige and gained her new respect, in every country visited, from Iran to Indonesia.

India, in addition, is displaying a greater confidence in its ability to organize the subcontinent without fear of reaction from Peking. India's subcontinent neighbors agree that this assessment is correct and that China can do little to help them. In looking ahead to the next generation of leaders, there is general agreement that while they will be more nationalistic, they will also be more pragmatic in accepting Indian dominance. Only in Bangladesh are the future leaders seen as becoming more adventuresome in expressing anti-Indian sentiments.

Perhaps more important now and over the next few years is the problem for India of coping with Pakistan--and beyond that with Iran. Given India's more confident attitude, the temptation for solving the problem of the one remaining neighbor that weakens India's claim to hegemony in the subcontinent must be very great. India's perception of her vital interests in the Indian Ocean and her need for Persian Gulf oil, and how these mesh with the Shah's ambitions for his country will also have much to do with the direction events will take over the next decade in South Asia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In modern times, beginning with its independence, India has always been considered the primary power of the subcontinent by most countries of the world. While countries of the region itself were reluctant to accept this, India has always considered her primacy a right which her neighbors morally and practically ought to accept, and any view India has of herself or any action she takes in the subcontinent, assumes this position.

But before 1965 India's primacy was more form than substance. Her hegemony was not accepted by her neighbors nor by China. The Soviets, for their own reasons, supported India's position, and the U.S. accepted it but with a somewhat more limited definition of what such primacy meant.

India's actual weakness of power was humiliatingly revealed by the Chinese incursion into northern India in 1962, and as late as the 1965 war with Pakistan, she could not convincingly cope with that neighbor. Up to that time, then, India's accomplishments in asserting her primary position in the subcontinent were not notable, and her neighbors accordingly, while wary of her potential, nonetheless were comforted by India's weakness and ineptness.

Since that time, however, India's performance in moving toward a greater degree of hegemony on the subcontinent has been more impressive. Pakistan's civil war and resulting dismemberment almost completely eliminated the military threat of India's only real adversary in the region. Equally important was India's explosion of a nuclear device. These events have been followed by the de facto absorption of Sikkim, moves to consolidate Kashmir more firmly into the India union, and a continual series of negotiations with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on economic matters at least in part designed to establish a more pragmatic, longer term relationship with them.

In terms of U.S. national interests, India and the subcontinent do not rank among our prime concerns except in a negative sense. It would be counter to those interests if India were dominated by any other major power. This U.S. position, however, assumes that India, despite her hegemony in the region, would not herself become a major power.

Over the next decade this latter assumption is likely to remain valid but considerable change in India's position is possible. She will likely succeed in eliminating completely any challenge to her hegemony in the subcontinent itself, and conceivably even expand beyond it. Super power rivalries, notably the Sino-Soviet dispute, could thaw and thereby affect

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India's position, and she is likely to face much stronger sub-regional groupings of countries in West and Southeast Asia who will oppose any Indian dominance in their area. Nonetheless, if India is successful in organizing the subcontinent to a degree that would permit her to devote more of her resources to internal development or to expand her hegemony beyond the immediate subcontinent, then she could become a much more important factor in great power relationships. If she over-extends herself and fails, on the other hand, the region could be laid open to disintegration and super power rivalries.

In this sense, then, what India does over the next decade is an important concern of the U.S. Such a projection, to be complete, would have to cover a great many complex factors clearly beyond the scope of this study. Since the pace and degree of acceptance--or resistance--she encounters in the subcontinent is of prime importance in determining how much she can do beyond it, this study will attempt to show how her neighbors view their relationship with India over the next decade.

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## II. INDIA AND HER SUPER NEIGHBORS

Although this study does not include a survey of India's relations with the super powers, all of her foreign relations are directly affected by her relationships with the super powers and these in turn are directly related to the relationships the super powers have with each other. Any discussion of India in Asia, therefore, must at least refer to the state of relations between India, the Soviet Union, and China.

The present direction of India's relations with the Soviet Union are dictated by the Sino-Soviet dispute. The Soviet support for India emanates from the Soviet desire for a relatively strong India challenging China, keeping other Asian nations off balance and forestalling if possible any moves toward western-oriented blocs, offering some hope of access to Southeast Asia and some influence in the Indian Ocean.

India looks on the Soviets as a balance to any threats from other powers such as China or as a guarantor of her own foreign ambitions, and as a means for developing her own power status. The Soviets can provide needed technical know-how, and economic and military assistance, but do not in return expect a Communist India, since that would bring to it economic burdens and political rivalry it can ill afford, and result in little more if not less than it gains from a friendly relationship with an India structured as she is today.

India will continue to need the assistance now given by the Soviets, and Russia in turn, even if the Sino-Soviet dispute should thaw considerably, is likely to want to maintain a high level of influence in the subcontinent and beyond. The price for this assistance, however, is likely to rise with any fall in the level of the Sino-Soviet dispute. While up to now the Indians have apparently parried any Soviet demands for military concessions, such tactics may become increasingly difficult, and some Indian experts in this field detect some strains already developing between the two countries.

The Sino-Indian relationship, on the other hand, seems to be going through a change, at least in each country's perception of the limits of their power in the subcontinent. In the past, India saw China as a competitor for third world leadership, a threat to her security, and a major obstacle to establishing hegemony in her own region. Simply by its power and presence, China had been able to erode the confidence of the border states in India's protective power, and encourage Pakistani resistance--all without any explicit threat.

For China, India's significance has always been low in threat capacity and in alliance potential. She always seems to

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appear on the side of China's strategic enemies (capitalists, the Soviets). To China, India is relevant now as a part of the Soviet scheme to encircle China, but never as a threat herself unless India should try to challenge China's position in Asia.

However, in the subcontinent, there is a perceptible change in how these two countries view their capabilities in this region. India seems to have a new confidence that she can organize the subcontinent under her hegemony without fear of Chinese reaction. China in turn seems to sense the limits of its capability to thwart India's ambitions in the subcontinent. India's absorption of Sikkim, her present strained relations with Nepal, and China's apparent lack of interest in exploiting Bangladesh and Nepal's difficulties with India can be seen as examples of behavior which is in some contrast to what might have been expected a few years ago. At the present time, India's expansionism and China's restraint is confined to the subcontinent, but what the precise limits beyond which Chinese reaction would develop is less clear.

Thus, over the next decade, both the Soviets and China will continue to deal with India on the basis of their own dispute with each other. Whatever actions they take, whatever relationships they develop in the region, and whatever change takes place in the relationship with each other, their actions will be paramount to deciding for India what course she must follow to attain her own ambitions.

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### III. INDIA AND NEIGHBORING REGIONS

As seen in broad terms, two subregions flank the subcontinent--the Persian Gulf area to the west, and Southeast Asia to the east. Like the subcontinent, these subregions are amorphous, unstable, but seemingly moving slowly toward some sort of cohesion under a different primary power. In the subcontinent, India is so much larger than its neighbors that its status as the primary power, while resisted, is nonetheless generally recognized. In the Persian Gulf, Iran, through its financial strength and adroit political activity, is establishing a position of primacy, though still somewhat tenuously. In Southeast Asia, a regional grouping under ASEAN is slowly forming with Indonesia the likely primary power.

#### A. The Persian Gulf - Iran

Relations between Iran and India in the post-war period have always been correct but clouded by different approaches to Pakistan and by the nature of each others alliances. Up to more recent times, neither perceived much identity of interests and felt the other largely irrelevant to more pressing concerns.

In the 1970's each country has assumed a somewhat different posture toward its neighbors. India has more actively been trying to consolidate its regional position. Iran has moved rapidly to expand her influence in the Persian Gulf area and beyond, by markedly expanding her military capability and through formal and informal agreements of all kinds with a host of countries. The Shah himself goes far beyond his immediate region in proposing cooperation with his country, such as his suggestion of a "common market" from Iran to Australia.

Iran has pursued this policy apparently with little concern for its effect on India or at least with a belief that its own activities do not seriously conflict with Indian interests. One Indian official admitted that even at a most sensitive point--Iranian support for Pakistan--Iran's main concern appears to be to prevent Soviet penetration into the Persian Gulf, not to bolster Pakistan against India. Most Indian officials, and Iranian officials as well, claim that there is no conflict of interests, that the two economies are in fact complementary, and that Iran and India can continue to pursue their objectives in their own areas without fear of any eventual conflict. Two non-government Indian experts, however, saw a conflict developing quickly--in military terms. Both saw the Shah (or some Iranian Colonel Kaddafi-type successor) expanding his security interests to a point where India will be forced to challenge him. While

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some Indian naval officers apparently agree with this scenario, one Indian Foreign Office official thought the two countries would inevitably have to come to some kind of understanding on their respective areas of vital interests.

Under more normal circumstances, India would likely have been more vociferous in her objections to Iranian support of Pakistan or to the growth of an Iranian Navy in the western part of the Indian Ocean. But India must cope with its oil problem, and the Persian Gulf has oil. Indian officials maintain that India had to adopt a stance which would permit a continued supply of oil and as a result, a policy decision was made in 1973 to place more emphasis on pursuing foreign policy objectives among the Persian Gulf countries than on Southeast Asia. By cultivating reasonably cooperative relations with the countries of the area--including Iran--India has some hope of benefiting from the economic development of the oil producers, as well as maintain an uninterrupted flow of vital oil. Even if India should eventually find its own oil, Arab oil money will continue to attract Indian economic interests to that area. One Indian official compared this benefit with the economic spin-off Japan gained from the Korean War.

Thus, in the mid-1970's, the relationship has apparently, at least on the surface, changed from one of distant hostility to limited cooperation. Both now appear interested in developing a symbiotic relationship at least over the short term. In the longer term, however, the potential for rivalry remains. Each must recognize the other as the main political/military rival in the western Indian Ocean. Each receives its most important weapons systems from different patrons. Ideologically, culturally, ethnically, neither has much regard for the other. While most officials believe the two countries will develop their policies in a way that will avoid any possible rivalry, others, usually projecting longer term ideas, see Iran and India moving toward an eventual conflict of interests both economically and militarily.

With the exception of differences over Pakistan however, possible clashes between Iran and India seem somewhat distant for the moment. Just how far Iranian support for Pakistan can go before triggering some reaction from New Delhi, no Indian official would (nor doubtless could) say. Similarly, how big can the Shah's Navy become, or how far into the Indian Ocean can it seek to dominate, before India feels obliged to take some counter-action is also unclear. What counter measures India has the capability to take in any case is equally open to question.

Foreign policy decision making in Iran is so centralized that there are very few Iranians in a position to discuss that country's long term views of India. It appears that while both countries do not anticipate any serious difficulties, both keep

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a wary eye on each other. Iran did not make any unusually strong objections to India's nuclear explosion but obviously watches developments closely. India, on the other hand, monitors Iran's aid to Pakistan and its acquisition of a navy with equal interest. If present trends should continue, however, it seems likely that at some point in the next few years, the two countries will find their interests sufficiently in conflict, that either a more openly hostile relationship will develop, or some form of formal accommodation will have to be made to clearly define and separate the two spheres of interests.

#### B. Southeast Asia - Indonesia

While Iran's room for maneuver hinges to some degree on the Soviet's preoccupation with China, Indonesia's freedom of action depends somewhat on China's preoccupation with the Soviets. According to one Indonesian Foreign Office official, it is because Indonesia is so influenced by super power relationships that India in the foreseeable future cannot be a candidate to balance Chinese influence in Southeast Asia--only another super power could have the capability to be an effective counterweight.

This is not to say that Indonesia does not view India as having grown in stature over the past few years. While the traditional cultural enmity between the two peoples continues to exist, there has been admiration and respect for India's technological achievements--especially her nuclear capability, and her military capability is not dismissed lightly by Indonesians. Despite this, however, Indonesians do not see India as having the power to offset Chinese influence, and in any event, they are not likely to try drawing further away from the Chinese by backing into the Indians.

While Indonesia, like Iran on the other side of India, is the primary power of the subregion, there are important dissimilarities. While Iran looks on India--including her military power--with disdain, Indonesians seem to have more respect for it. Indonesia itself is not now expansionary, but it is sensitive to any attempts by India to insert herself into the region (officials and non-officials alike reflect this view). It is now only beginning to place a higher priority on ASEAN (largely as a result of the events in Vietnam), and it is the organization which Indonesia views as a base from which the country could establish a position of primacy in the area. Thus its stance toward India seems relatively defensive and there is little activity in strengthening relationships with any of India's neighbors in the subcontinent. The Indonesian economy, unlike Iran's, does not complement India's, and in some fields such as textiles and small machinery, the two countries are competitive in third markets.

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The Indonesian view of India over the next several years is that of an expansionary power who will not reach super power status but will be sufficiently strong in the area to demand from Indonesia more attention than has been the case. While Indian officials claim that India has diverted emphasis in foreign policy away from Southeast Asia, in fact there seems to have been more activity than in the past, the relationship is likely to grow even more active. The objective of this attention from Indonesia's standpoint is not necessarily to establish closer cooperation between the two countries, but more likely to monitor developments in India. The composition of a seminar group visiting India, for example, is made up of some Surabaya University professors, representatives of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and officials of BATAN (Indonesia's atomic energy agency).

While no Indonesian official seems to have projected any closer cooperation with Iran as a matter of policy, a group of Indonesian journalists had obviously given some thought to such a prospect. As one pointed out, the two countries shared certain common interests, OPEC, the Indian Ocean, and an expansionary India as a neighbor.

Such strategic balance of power relationships are doubtless premature, but should the three regions (Persian Gulf, the sub-continent, and ASEAN) eventually become workable cohesive groups, such a development could become an almost natural result.

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#### IV. INDIA AND THE SUBCONTINENT

India has always viewed herself as the premier power of the subcontinent. She dominates the South Asian subcontinent geographically. Her population, second largest in the world, is several times larger than all her neighbors combined. With one of the world's largest military establishments, she not only dominates her neighbors in terms of numbers, but unlike any of them, she has the capability to reproduce almost all of the material and equipment used by her military forces. Even in economic terms, where India is weakest, she is several times greater in power than all her neighbors.

While this primary position has always been apparent, it has been emotionally resisted by her immediate neighbors who fear a loss of their own identity, and it has been restrained or used by, the super powers for their own ends. Although India's primacy on the subcontinent is becoming an accepted fact, there still remain inhibiting factors which limit India's actual hegemony and therefore her ability to utilize that hegemony to pursue her interests beyond the subcontinent.

Always there hangs over India the fact that she is not a super power. The interrelationships of the U.S.S.R., China, and the United States, have a direct bearing on their relationship with India, and these in turn must be the basis on which India can conduct her own foreign policy. A change in the former, which is beyond the power of India to influence, inevitably must cause a change in the latter.

India's economic weaknesses are apparent and constitute the biggest psychological obstacle to acceptance of India as the prime power by her neighbors in the subcontinent, and the biggest obstacle to attaining status as a super power. Her economic weakness, however, while real enough, is often overplayed. Despite her poverty, India has the tenth largest GNP in the world, and in fact, despite the weak overall economy, has demonstrated a determination and ability to achieve specific goals such as her nuclear capability.

In trying to organize a regional grouping in the subcontinent, or in trying to expand it beyond that area if she decides to do so, India continues to face other obstacles as well. She is so much larger than her neighbors, that taking the lead in such an endeavor is often counterproductive. While inevitably time is eroding this older view, India's ruling elite are themselves in many ways still more emotionally linked with the UK and Europe than with their own region. Finally, while India has incorporated within herself a large variety of culturally disparate groups (economic, geographic, linguistic, religious) which offer her opportunities for special relationships with other countries, these same differences also represent enmities, suspicions, disdain, and

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even hatred among the peoples of the area and make a natural association difficult.

India's neighbors in the subcontinent are Pakistan, the Himalayan Kingdoms, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Combined, they could not even approach India's power--in military terms, population, land, technology, production, GNP, or in fact any combination of them. Divided as they are by geography, each with its own particular historical background and political system, the wonder is that the subcontinent has not long since amalgamated into an Indian confederation of some kind.

Over the years these countries have, of course, been subjected to the frustrations of trying to maintain their own identity and freedom of action against an overwhelmingly large India. Nonetheless, they have been somewhat comforted by that country's shortcomings. Politically, it seemed to them that the Indian union would inevitably disintegrate, that her economy would collapse, or some other development would occur to keep India's primacy under constant challenge. A strong Pakistan acted as a lightning rod and kept India from being too aggressive on other fronts. And finally both China's and the United States' desire to offset Soviet interests by supporting some of India's neighbors, all offered some hope that India's hegemonic ambitions in South Asia could be restrained.

Given the result of the 1971 war which effectively reduced, if not eliminated, a strong Pakistan; given what appears to be a reduced interest in Indian activities in the subcontinent by both the U.S. and China; and given India's technological achievements (a nuclear explosion, an Indian satellite); a more pragmatic view of India seems to be emerging from her neighbors in the subcontinent.

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#### A. PAKISTAN

All the religious and cultural antipathies that existed between Hindus and Moslems and that took on a political coloration during the struggle for independence, carried on as a bitter hostility between the two new states of Pakistan and India thereafter. Throughout the short history since then, Pakistan's energies and resources have been devoted to maintaining its own identity and unity separate from India. In its international relationships, it sought to avoid what it always feared was India's real objective--integration into India (through dismemberment and reduction to client state status)--by embracing other countries with creditable military support capabilities.

Up through the 1960's, Pakistan was reasonably successful in resisting Indian dominance. Militarily Pakistan had remained a credible power which continued to challenge Indian hegemony in the subcontinent. Both China and the U.S. supported Pakistan at least partly as a counter to Soviet influence in India.

With the 1971 war, however, all of this changed. Pakistan was dismembered. It seemed to have lost its credible military capability, and was no longer an effective challenge to Indian hegemony. Other countries of the region no longer had the leverage Pakistan offered in their own relations with India. China and the U.S., while continuing to support Pakistan, gained much less in political terms for this support. India had become in fact the dominant power of the subcontinent.

Pakistan has recovered somewhat from this low ebb of 1972. It is not now a military threat in any way, but through the support it gains from China, the U.S., and now Iran, it still offers some challenge to Indian hegemony, though to a much smaller degree than pre-1971. The unexpected recovery of some of its former position vis-a-vis India was brought about by the oil crisis of 1973.

With the rise in the power and resources of the Moslem nations of the Persian Gulf, Pakistan has been able to elicit greatly increased support from those countries. A common Islamic heritage is usually considered the rationale for this support, but in fact self-interest (the prevention of Soviet penetration into the Persian Gulf area) is the more probable reason. Additionally, the main contributor to this support is Iran, which is likely to become a net importer of capital itself in a few years and thereby less able to continue giving Pakistan such a large part of its financial support. Pakistan is exploiting the growing market for its food products in the Persian Gulf and some visualize religion and economics as a base weaving Pakistan into a Persian Gulf association of

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nations. However, as one Pakistani official put it, the country is inextricably linked by geography to the subcontinent and no emotional attachment to their Moslem brothers to the west can change that.

Pakistan publicly was vociferous in its condemnation of India's nuclear explosion. However, privately, officials admit that the achievement psychologically enhanced India's prestige even among Pakistanis. Although a nuclear posture would be the one obvious way for Pakistan to gain a psychological parity with India, officials gave no indication their country was developing this option. If it was parity in nuclear weapons capability that Pakistan would hope to gain, then as one former Pakistani official now in the Bangladesh Foreign Office observed, Pakistan's very "political" army would have to be completely restructured and reoriented, and this he did not see taking place for a long time.

India's objectives with regard to the further dismemberment of Pakistan appears to be a favorite topic of discussion by officials and intellectuals throughout the subcontinent. Indian officials, intellectuals and journalists maintain that further dismemberment of Pakistan is not in India's interest, while the Pakistani point to such Indian moves as the unnecessarily strong condemnation of U.S. and Iranian military support, the close relationship with Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, among other things, to support their view that India does want a powerless or dismembered Pakistan. What Indian officials seem to hope for at least for the present is a Pakistan in its present form, and one which acquiesces in Indian dominance. Some Indian officials point to their own desire to prevent Soviet penetration of the Gulf and Indian Ocean. One highly placed Indian journalist and one non-government expert on Pakistani affairs saw the necessity for India of having a Pakistan as a buffer against Iran. One other pointed to the domestic and political difficulties that would result if, as a result of dismemberment, some 70 million Moslems had to be absorbed into Hindu India.

However, India's position in the region and in her international relationships in general have always been weakened by the presence of an antagonistic neighbor on her border. As India's position with her eastern neighbors improves, and as Iran continues to expand its influence, India must come to feel that the Pakistan problem must be brought to some kind of solution. As one Indian Foreign Office official said, India would prefer a friendly Pakistan, but if the choice was a Pakistan that posed a military threat of any kind, or a further dismembered Pakistan, then India would choose the latter.

Pakistan for the foreseeable future will continue to use its foreign alliances to the greatest extent possible to maintain freedom from Indian dominance, while at the same time moving toward normalization of relations with India under the Simla Agreement. However, the next generation of Pakistani leaders are likely to be more pragmatic, less emotional about their

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relations with India. They will not have shared in the Indian struggle for independence, and will have grown up as Pakistanis, not as partitioned Indians. They will be more aware of India's power superiority and the limits of support Pakistan can expect from other countries. One young Pakistani Foreign Office official thought there would be a much greater acceptance of India as the primary power of the subcontinent, but that there would continue to be many points of dispute between the two countries.

#### B. THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS

An Indian official rationalized India's actions toward Sikkim as being based on security. It had been a communications center between India and Tibet even in British days and was still important today. Bhutan, however, posed no security problem, but, according to him, it was so small and so isolated that whether it could ever become a viable state "remains to be seen".

While no official challenged Nepal's claim to nationhood, almost all of them challenged Nepal's right to oppose Indian policies.

The Nepalese economy is completely dependent on India. Almost everything destined for Nepal must be transferred through India, and India through aid and special trade programs has been subsidizing the Nepalese economy. In international affairs, however, the mountain kingdom has at times taken positions that countered India's. It strongly opposed India's nuclear explosion, it reacted strongly to the absorption of Sikkim, and it has continued to stall the Kanali power project. In addition, by accepting more Chinese road building assistance, China may rival India as an aid donor in Nepal, and it is this potential influence that disturbs India most.

India, in turn, is taking strong measures to "normalize" the relationship. As one Indian official said, if Nepal is dependent on India economically, the kingdom's politics ought to more closely parallel this fact. This strong belief that Nepal should be "put in its place", as one of India's foremost experts on Nepal phrased it, is shared by government, intellectuals, and journalists alike in India.

Economically and militarily, India has always so dominated Nepal that the events of 1971 and the nuclear explosion did little to change the equation for them. One Nepalese Foreign Office official said that India was already so "weapons-heavy" that the nuclear capability simply meant still another larger weapon.

For the future, Nepal has its "next generation" of leaders already in place. Though animosity toward a dominant India hardly had its genesis with this new group of leaders, they have been more nationalistic and generally outspoken in expressing it. A Foreign Office official in Katmandu however, expressed

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the belief that there was nothing Nepal could do about the strong measures India was now taking, and that the kingdom's leaders would accept the fact that Nepal was totally at India's mercy. There was, he said, understanding that China, while sympathetic to Nepal's plight, could do very little in practical terms to help the kingdom.

The composition of the population in the country is also shifting in favor of a more pro-Indian stance for Nepal. The Terai plain of south Nepal has been absorbing steady immigration from both the mountain areas of Nepal and from neighboring India. The people there, through the influx of Indians as well as through communications with India (which is much easier and more widespread than through Katmandu) is largely Indianized. Within a few years, it is estimated that the majority of Nepal's population will be living in the Terai plain, probably bringing with it increasing pressures for closer ties with India.

The picture thus painted projects a very frustrating position for any nation. Yet it is probably a valid assessment which, taking India's attitude into account, will have to be accepted. The likelihood is that Nepal's present leaders, or others more acceptable to India, will increasingly have less room for any independent policies of their own, at least in areas India considers its vital interest.

#### C. BANGLADESH

Like Pakistan, Bangladesh is Indian in all but religion. But unlike Pakistan, it has almost no alliance potential with which it could adopt independent action in its foreign relations. Its present government was installed by Indian arms and largely is maintained on Indian sufferance. The country represents such an economic liability relative to any political benefits that might be obtained, that India is able to maintain its overwhelming dominance without effort and at little cost.

Privately some Indian officials express the hope that Bangladesh can establish closer relations with other countries, not only to help that nation economically, but also to divert Bangladesh frustrations at being so completely dependent on India. An old Pakistani politician suggested that Bangladesh should align itself with the Moslem countries of Southeast Asia, and some Indonesian officials saw Bangladesh as eventually becoming the western anchor to ASEAN.

There is considerable anti-Indian resentment even among leaders in Bangladesh, and if this should surface at any time, in public demonstrations or political upheaval, it could cause India to take countermeasures which would demonstrate even more

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clearly Bangladesh's total dependence on India. One journalist in Dacca has expressed the belief that India, by its very nature, will inevitably carry its expansionism too far and eventually collapse, thus freeing client states from India's grip. But a Foreign Office official expressed the government's view that geographically, militarily, and economically, Bangladesh would always have to cope with a dominant India around its borders. There would always be many problems, but essentially Bangladesh would have to adjust itself to these conditions and in fact, since the economies of the two countries are already complementary, Bangladesh would develop its industry accordingly. The future as seen now, then, is of a client state having only a facade of sovereignty.

Over the next decade, however, new leaders will come to power in Bangladesh--the Freedom Fighters--who believe their independence was achieved by their own efforts, and who generally hold strong anti-Indian feelings. The extent this generation accepts or challenges the policies of the present Bangladesh leadership will largely determine what Indian policies toward Bangladesh will be in the future. But the options are extremely limited for both countries--for Bangladesh there is simply no way to avoid India's domination, and for India its only options are in the form their dominance should take.

#### D. BURMA

After independence from Britain, Burma largely purged itself of Indian influence as well by expelling large numbers of Indian merchants and civil servants. To this day there is a strong antipathy toward Indians, but not toward India as a country. Politically, Burma has maintained only a minimum of contact with India, being far more preoccupied with its Chinese neighbor to the north. Recently, however, state-to-state relations between the two countries have become more active, both politically and economically. One Indian official thought that the government-to-government trade relations that were now being worked out were a model that India would like to follow with other countries. Trade, in fact, while still very small, seems to be growing more significant.

A Burmese Foreign Office official thought that this increase in activity was a natural development, and that Burma's purpose was not to use their relationship with India as an offset to Chinese influence in the country. Burma, he said, had not been influenced by India's nuclear explosion nor by its victory in the 1971 war. These were events that took place in the subcontinent, but Burma was determined to continue its policy of neutrality in dealing with all its neighbors.

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While this is doubtless the national policy, an Indian official posted to Burma for some time thought that Burma was, in fact, beginning to expand its relationship with India as a balance to China, and in recognition of India's growing strength. He pointed to Burma's original stance of criticism of Indian actions in the 1971 war to the present favorable attitude toward India as an example.

Though one Indian journalist thought his country should be more aggressive in pressuring Burma to halt the flow of insurgents through Burma into India, the Indian government over the next few years is not likely to open new uncertainties to its east while its hegemony is still under some challenge in the west. China's unwillingness to react to Indian initiatives in the subcontinent, on the other hand, almost surely do not extend to Burma. The Burmese, on their part, consider themselves a part of Southeast Asia, not the subcontinent, and given the size of their neighbors, the next generation of leaders are most likely to continue the country's neutral stance between China and India.

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## V. CONCLUSIONS

Each of India's neighbors see its relationship with that country over the next decade through a prism of its own concerns and interests. Despite the many aspects of any bilateral relationships, however, certain views on specific aspects show a certain similiarity as seen from Tehran to Jakarta.

With the possible exception of Pakistan, Indian hegemony in the subcontinent is already a fact. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Himalayan Kingdoms, while their bilateral relationships with India are not without important problems, still are dominated politically and militarily (and often economically as well) by India. In all the subcontinent, only Pakistan remains--not as any credible military threat to India, but as an agent of threat to India's dominant position in South Asia.

The 1971 war not only eliminated any military threat from India's subcontinent neighbor, but it also eliminated any leverage India's troubles with Pakistan gave to other neighbors in the region (but not to those outside of it). While the 1973 oil crisis dampened some of India's euphoria generated by the 1971 victory, all India's neighbors in the subcontinent, with the specific exception of Pakistan, were subjected to the same oil problem and thus their relationship with India changed little as a result of it.

The explosion by India of a nuclear device followed these events in 1974. There were various degrees of reaction from the countries in the area, but with the passage of time, India's accomplishment is now viewed by her neighbors with respect and admiration. Unanimously, in every country from Iran to Indonesia, India's prestige seems to have been enhanced by that action. The effect it has had on the policies of Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia in terms of their own nuclear development, however, is still not clear.

With the defacto absorption of Sikkim, the reinstatement of the Kashmiri leader on conditions favorable to India, and the strong stance now being taken toward Nepal, India is displaying a greater confidence in its ability to organize the subcontinent without fear of reaction from Peking. Officials in Nepal, Bangladesh, and even Pakistan held the view that China could do little to offset Indian dominance in any event. India seems to understand this view and Peking, though it has voiced strong objections to the absorption of Sikkim, has done little else and apparently has advised moderation on Nepal in its present problems with India. Throughout the subcontinent, then, there is a general

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acceptance of India as the dominant power of the area. Even in Pakistan there seems to be a more pragmatic view of India's relative power and the need for Pakistan to accommodate to it.

But there are problems and questions for the future as well. In broad terms, how far will the major powers and even neighboring subregional leaders permit her to go? India's two super neighbors--the Soviet Union and China--in dispute with each other and maintaining different views on India, remain in a position to influence events in the subcontinent in a way that could be either helpful or harmful to India's interests. Two subregions--the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia--are haltingly forming groups of countries whose relationships with India have yet to be defined.

Perhaps most important for India now and over the next few years is the problem of coping with Pakistan and beyond that with Iran. Given India's more confident attitude, the temptation to solve the problem of the one remaining neighbor that weakens India's claim to hegemony in the subcontinent must be very great. India's perception of her vital interests in the Indian Ocean and her need for Persian Gulf oil, and how these mesh with the Shah's ambitions for his country will also have much to do with the direction events will take in South Asia.

More than one observer of India felt that that country, based on its history and philosophy, would tend to become over-confident and expand beyond its capabilities. While this is more likely largely wishful thinking by opponents, there is in fact no natural limits or regional borders that clearly define areas of vital interest between India and China in Southeast Asia, or between India and Iran in the Persian Gulf area, and thus the danger always exists for some miscalculations.

Internally for India, continued instability always presents the temptation for foreign adventure to be used to obscure domestic problems (a fear expressed by a prominent Socialist member of the Lok Sabha). Given the myriad of differences within the country--linguistic, religious, geographic and social--none of which parallel political lines, any one of which could quickly surface, there is always the risk that a small "adventure" or some entirely unintentional action might trigger some kind of military confrontation between countries in the area.

These are problems faced today which will extend on into the decade ahead. How all of India's relationships with her neighbors will stand the transfer of power to the next generation of leaders is also unclear. The common struggle for independence will be only dimly perceived. The obsession over their own separate identities, so strongly felt among India's neighbors, will be taken for granted by those who have grown up as separate nationalities. The descriptions most often used for the next generation were: pragmatic, less concerned with ideology and long term

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strategy, more concerned with immediate welfare, more aware of their regional associations, more nationalistic in their views.

In India there was a general consensus that new leaders would not depart drastically from the policies of today (though one Indian politician thought the form that democracy would take in India over the next five years will determine how the next generation will pursue those interests). In Pakistan, officials thought the biggest difference in new leaders would be the diminution of concern over identity and consequently national security. In Nepal that generation is already in power, and in Sri Lanka it is already making its influence felt. In Bangladesh, however, the far more nationalistic Freedom Fighters may well try to steer their country beyond the limits tolerable to their dominant neighbor.

India has established defacto hegemony in the subcontinent. Her obvious goal beyond that is to be accepted by the rest of the world as a major power. The next few years should show whether she chooses to reach that objective by strengthening herself and consolidating "her" region, or by continuing expansion beyond the subcontinent.

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In preparing this study, the author discussed the subject with the pertinent Department of State country officers, and with embassy officers in every country visited. Others who were interviewed are:

Washington

Mr. Eric Gonsalves, DCM, Indian Embassy

Tehran

Seminar: "The Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean in International Politics"

Dr. Mohammed Fard-Saidi, Institute for International Political and Economic Studies

Dr. Bhabani Sengupta, Columbia University

Dr. Dieter Braun, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

Mr. Ganti S. Barghava, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London

Mr. Bharat Wariavwalla, Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, Delhi

Mr. Prakash Shah, Political Counselor, Indian Embassy

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Mr. Zafar Hilaly, Director for India, MFA

Mr. Sardar Shanrat Hayat, Independent, MNA

Mr. Stanley Jayaweera, First Secretary, Sri Lanka Embassy

Mr. Ross Masud, Director, Pakistan Institute for Strategic Studies

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Dr. Mohammed Ayooob, School of International Studies, Nehru University

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Mr. D. Mukardjee, Editor, The Times of India

Mr. M. Limaye, Socialist Member, Lok Sabha

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Mr. Vinich Vangtal, Member, House of Representatives, Rajburi

Jakarta

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