

The Peace of Westphalia 1648 laid out the ideals of the state, the Westphalian ideal, which was only realized three centuries later with the end of the colonial era and national self-determination as the sole principle of the political organization of the world. The world became populated by bounded national, social, economic and cultural communities. The questions of national sovereignty are still highly charged and lie at the core of the Westphalian ideal of territoriality, autonomy, primacy of the state and the anarchy of the international system. It is the end of the Cold War which liberated various regions of the world from overarching superpower competition. Simultaneously, the rising global interaction with the flow of trade, capital and people across national borders facilitated by physical, normative and symbolic infrastructure that underwrite the global condition turned the attention on regional aspects of security.

The focus on regions also received impetus from the growth of regionalism in the 1980s, in the tripolar economy encompass-

COOPERATIVE SECURITY FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH ASIA

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ing North America, North East Asia and Europe. A region is a spatial concept, defined by geographical proximity, the intensity of interactions, shared cultural identities and institutional frameworks. But regions are also dynamic entities, spatially defined cultural, economic, and political constructions, whose nature and functions are transformed over time (Griffiths and O'Callaghan 2004: 274). The regional integration of economies and their relative success in South East Asia and Latin America among others propelled states towards a plethora of regional economic agreements to exploit the synergies of collectives. The regionalizations involved a significant change in attitude and behaviour for erstwhile adversaries and also sacrifice of sovereignty. The success of economic regionalization also achieved notable success in ameliorating political and security issues, sometimes, as a result of being part of the collective, in others as a consequence of the economic integration. Such was the shift in state to state relations in some regions owing to the successes of regionalization that a linear developmental vision foresaw that all regions would come to represent the structure of the current European Union (EU) in some form or the other or at its bare

Coexistence in an Interdependent World

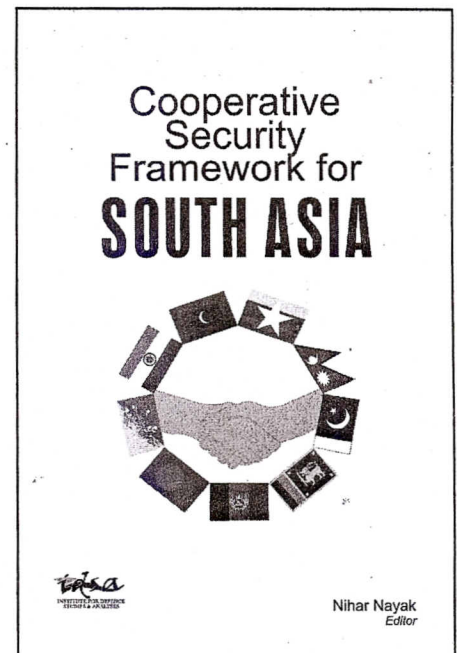
Satyabrat Sinha

minimum, some approximation of the Association of South East Asian nations (ASEAN).

Strategic thinking is dominated by the realist conception of security. According to Realism, threats to a state's security arise chiefly from outside its borders and these threats are primarily military in nature and generally call for a military response. Scholars belonging to the liberal school define security by focusing on *interstate* rather than *state* security, their principal concern is with the integration of national security with systemic security concerns. Arguing that due to the interdependence between states, the security of the parts cannot be distinguished from that of the system as a whole (Burchill 2001: 35). In other words, due to the extent of interlinking of the various divisions of the international system, security and welfare are dependent upon each other. Thus, it is imperative that the international as well as national system must be preserved for peace.

The changing nature of the international order and the different problems of the postcolonial states led to the questioning of the traditional notions about security. The focus on the external military threats to the state took on a different dimension in the Third World and they dialectically interacted with internal powers and there was the new threat to the state from within: other ethnic groups with their own claims to a 'nation'. The dissatisfaction and problems paved the way for an expansion and redefinition of what security means. The 1982 Palme Commission formulated the notion of Common Security, which eschewed competitive, zero-sum notions of deterrence and power, and instead emphasized cooperation, dialogue, and confidence building. The Commission promoted the idea of peace with others and not against them.

The revision of the traditional concept of security provided a fillip to the growth of the concept of regional security (Chipman 1997: 21). The concept by definition is established upon the notion of regionalism, essentially supposing that regionalism is the best approach to the resolution of regional issues. External influence can only have a neo-imperial motivation, or result in some



form of political dependency. It also draws from the notion that regional approaches and institutions can help develop locally derived and by extension locally supported solutions to security-related issues. On this basis, regional institutions provide a preliminary framework in which regional states can judge and act on the challenges to peace that affect them. One way of doing this is to cultivate norms of behaviour and promote cooperation among the members which will eradicate the 'resort to force' as a method of settling disputes. The regional level is also a richer level due to being located between the two ends of the system and the state level as it can incorporate the advantages of the two by keeping the comprehensiveness of the systemic level and the details of the state level of analysis intact. The moving away from the traditional concept of military security also created space for the security of the individual for his/her developmental needs and well being, which led to the inclusion of non-traditional threats to security.

It is in this wider framework of the growth and development of regional security that we can examine the Nihar Nayak edited book, *Cooperative Security Framework for South Asia* (henceforth *Cooperative Security*), under review. *Cooperative Security* examines

the problems inhibiting the process of regional security cooperation in South Asia and makes suggestions to overcome them. In its efforts, it puts under the lens the debate on cooperative security framework in South Asia, the enablers for such a framework, the practicality of such expectations in a region of conflict; the role of SAARC in this endeavour and in its suggestions, the existing models of cooperative security and the appropriate fit for South Asia. The book in four parts examines the conceptual debates, individual country perspectives, non-traditional security issues and finally, a consensus document on the way ahead, a proposal for a cooperative security framework in South Asia. The contributions in the book are enviably balanced with the senior scholars and experts with those of the new generation from various countries as the list of contributors enumerates. In its exploration, the different chapters survey a wide and a rich tapestry of issues that are of contemporary concern and of policy importance. The section on non-traditional security issues bring to focus issues of urgent and immediate attention that requires out of the box thinking in seeking solutions for their amelioration like climate change, environment, water and the Indus Water Treaty.

The review picks issue with the idea of building a common understanding in the South Asian region and of the South Asian region. A cooperative security system heralds 'free and open trade relations; and closely aligned foreign and security policies, including integrated or multinational military formations' (p. 70), national interests are sacrificed for the sake of the longer term common good and relies on 'dialogue, confidence building measures, interdependence and co-operation' (p. xv) around which the regime is constructed. In the constellation of South Asian states, it would be difficult to imagine such a possibility owing to the ideological conflict and fractious political competition within and its ramifications externally. The literature at hand too attests to the lack of rootedness of cooperative security structures owing to peculiar geographical situations (scattered smaller neighbours facing a contiguous and powerful India), historical baggage, fear of Indian enormity, preponderance of India and problematic India Pakistan relations among other things. The book in its introduction marks two schools of thought over the future structure and shape of the cooperative framework; the first is the status quoist school which sees SAARC as the right platform towards the endeavour, and the second group called revisionists who hold that SAARC is inherently incapable of the task in

its current avatar as well as in its amended form if hard security discussions are permitted (p. xviii).

In this brief summary of the subject matter of *Cooperative Security*, we have managed to isolate the fundamental issue facing the South Asian states of their inability to come together to tackle complicated and intractable problems that plague them. It is important to bear in mind that this failure is the usual introduction to any discussion on South Asian regionalism and it has also led to a reflection in the academic circuits of South Asia but disagreements abound. The first of such problems is the definition of South Asia, where the usual SAARC definitions are accepted but many scholars from India and Pakistan define an extended neighbourhood which includes Iran, Myanmar, Afghanistan and yet others who seek to factor in China's large presence and involvement with varied South Asian countries, suggesting that any examination of South Asian security issue cannot be done without China and so it makes sense to include China in the region. *Cooperative Security* is faithful to the SAARC definition of South Asia as being 'practical to accept', as Muni suggests (p. 4). It nevertheless raises important questions with regard to the security problematique in the region and the use of the China card by neighbours against India, the Sino-Indian-Pakistan triangular relations and the larger rivalry between the two Asian giants on a more inter-regional level.

It would have to be admitted that a movement towards cooperative security in operation in South Asia would preclude the above mentioned issues but with the increasing integration of the world through the laying down of transport and energy infrastructure, the intermeshing of economies, the salience of water issues in security calculation and the wide range of non-traditional security concerns make this segregation of South Asia into a structure excluding China rather artificial. China after all shares a large border with three South Asian countries, supports beleaguered regimes in the region, controls the source of water resources and is seen alternatively as an economic boon or bane which has to be factored into the calculations of all South Asian countries on hard security issues as well as NTS issues. As to how a successful cooperative security mechanism would deal with China and its role in the region remains to be seen; perhaps it could follow the model of ASEAN plus.

This brings us to the weak institutionalization of the smaller countries of South Asia and the role that China as a strong extra-regional actor will be tempted to contin-

ue playing in them. Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and even Bhutan remain mired in domestic conflicts, yet to define their identities or fending off challenges to their identity. The fractious nature of domestic politics in each of these countries and the internal conflicts within India are opportunities to other powers to buy influence and gain strategic advantage to further security and economic policies. The use of softer instruments of power and primarily political support while avoiding the mess, still complicates respective ties and creates opportunities for intrigue and leads to internal polarization backed by external rivalries of the kinds we see in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and also Sri Lanka.

The South Asian region, as a common civilizational space is an argument put forward towards explaining the necessary blocks available in achieving regionalism. But this is a dangerous argument as it cuts to the core of the anti-Indianism in the smaller countries which is not merely a fear of being absorbed into the culturally similar behemoth called India, losing their political identities but also, in countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, seeing the dominance of the Indian business community at the cost of the national. The civilization argument is often advanced by the most liberal of Indians and draws its sustenance from the cultural religious similarities of South Asia and is also advanced by the pro-Indian elite in some of the neighbouring countries. The issue is not to disqualify this source of strength but rather to suggest that an avowed flagging of this argument can result in raising fears of political domination, the explanation for the failure of the process so far.

Cooperative Security delves into the gamut of issues concerning regionalism and security for the purposes of exploring the possible structure of cooperative security framework in South Asia and while acknowledging them builds on the wide range of earlier writings. The failure of South Asian regionalism, the success of various defence agreements, bilateral versus multilateral, the abject failure of SAARC even on issues of Non Traditional issues and India, China, Pakistan ties are put under the scanner. However, *Cooperative Security* is not an account of the ills that plague South Asia but rather a documentation of the possible constraints and enablers for a cooperative security framework in South Asia and recommendations on the way forward. The book is successful in not only raising crucial questions with regard to cooperative security (attesting the reflective cogitations of South Asian civil society on the failure to regionalize) but goes further to

throw up for debate and discussions the pathways to it and the possible shape it might take. Almost a score into the twenty-first century, South Asian regionalism retains the same contours as it did in the decade of the end of the Cold War. The process of globalization has reduced the capacity of the national security state to deal with issues on its own. The wider definition of security has enabled a wider consensus on a range of issues attesting to individual security and provides new opportunities for the states to cooperate. Security is a relational phenomenon and also mediated by geography, and the national security of any given state cannot be understood without understanding the pattern of security interdependence in which it is embedded, underscoring the importance of regional level.

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Satyabrat Sinha is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Presidency University, Kolkata.

Book News

Decolonization in South Asia: Meanings of Freedom in Post-Independence West Bengal, 1947-52 by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay analyses the transitional politics of West Bengal in the light of recent developments in postcolonial theory on nationalism, treating the 'nation' as a space for contestation, rather than a natural breeding ground for homogeneity in the complex political scenario of post-Independence India. Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 254, price not stated.

Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America's Longest War edited by Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla brings together some of the finest minds in the fields of history, strategy, international relations, anthropology, ethics and mass communication to assess the prospects for peace and security in Afghanistan to debate what would best serve US interests. Foundation Books, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 229, ₹895.00

Illogic of Circular Reasoning

Nimmi Kurian

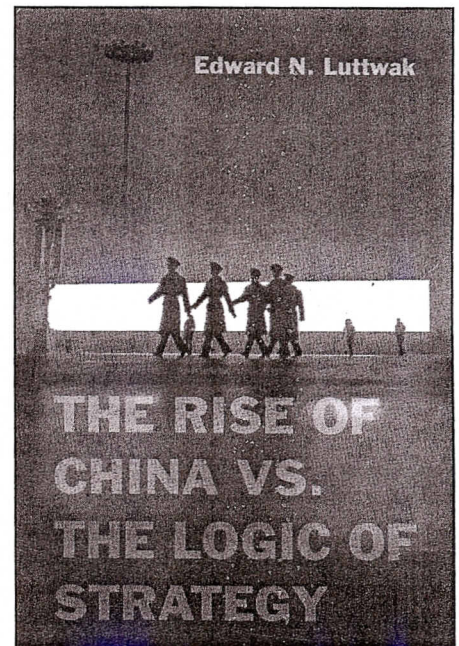
This is yet another book that obsesses and agonizes over China's rise, how the logic of strategy will dictate the choices China makes and the responses its actions are likely to evoke. China's political leaders are said to have little agency to dictate this future course though, 'trapped' as they are 'by the paradoxes of the logic of strategy'. Edward Luttwak goes on to argue that there is an 'inherent incompatibility' between China's growing economic capacity, military strength and diplomatic influence. The 'logic of strategy' is said to be an ironclad one, which 'applies in perfect equality to every culture in every age'. Attempts to throw in some humour to relieve the monotony of the narrative often tend to be facetious. Take for instance this flippant description of China's rise and the reactions it evokes. 'Riders in a crowded elevator cabin into which an extremely fat Mr. China has just stepped in must react self-protectively if he is becom-

THE RISE OF CHINA VS. THE LOGIC OF STRATEGY

By Edward N. Luttwak
Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts,
2012, pp. 320, price not stated.

ing fatter at a rapid rate, squeezing them against the walls—even if he is entirely unthreatening, and indeed affable.' He assumes that 'mounting opposition to China's aggrandizement' is likely to result in a collective strategy of 'geo-economic resistance' to China. This is quite a leap both in reasoning as well as conjecture since he does not delve into how these coalitions will come about or their feasibility. He stiches together a laundry list of recent geoeconomic actions taken by countries but he is himself clearly not convinced that these amount to an overall strategy with the capacity to restrain China. This argument is hammered through over twenty-two chapters some of which are on average four to five pages long.

Such meta-analysis is problematic at several levels. For one, there is relatively little attempt to analyse under what conditions these scenarios are likely to become a reality. There is also a tendency by and large to study China as a monolithic identity disregarding the role that domestic politics, in particular political uncertainties, play in fashioning China's strategic choices at any given point



of time. There is only a passing acquaintance with domestic debates and how preoccupations with stability concerns and legitimacy challenges play out in foreign policy behaviour choices. Luttwak is also selective in his choice of cases and arguments and this provides a skewed understanding of issues. Often the cases omitted would have made for far more interesting insights. For instance, the author mentions the protracted struggle between the Hans and the Xiongnu, the horse-nomad warriors of the 2nd and 3rd century BC who challenged the Hans for more than a century. But what is conspicuous is that there is only a cursory reference to the more recent and arguably the most protracted challenge that the Zunghars posed to the Qing imperial dynasty in the late seventeenth century. This is a curious and an unfortunate omission since it provides interesting insights into the nature of state-building challenges that engaged the Qing imperial state's energies and resources for nearly a century, starting from the Kangxi reign in the 1660s to the defeat of the Zunghars by the Qianlong emperor in 1759. It would take several armed expeditions, internal Mongol conflict-ridden politics and the military acumen and discipline of Qing forces before the northern threat to its frontiers would be controlled. In dealing with the Mongol threat, the Qing had to acknowledge the limits of a