

# INDIA'S BID FOR REGIONAL HEGEMONY AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM

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## **Abstract**

*The advent of the war against terrorism as a grand narrative has enmeshed both theory and praxis of international relations in intricate ways. Political science and politics, security studies, military art, immigration laws, ethics and social services have been recrafted to respond to an anthropology of fear which has almost become a domain in itself. War-on-terrorism as Weltanschauung was used not only by the USA but also by many other states, both liberal and authoritarian, in order to tackle their security problems, possibly silence opponents or advance their interests. This article envisages the aforementioned hypothesis for the case of India. The findings of the study show that the Indian war against terrorism has served more as a tool for nation-building than for maximizing regional power. Nonetheless New Delhi remains an inconsistent hegemon with mixed influence over its neighbours' stability.*

**Keywords: India, regional hegemony, hegemonic stability theory, post-Western IR, war on terrorism**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Even without appealing to media cliches which hailed September 11 as the dawn of a brand new world, completely different from everything before, one can surely state without exaggeration that the aftermath of WTC crashing down changed the international system in significant ways. The War on terrorism as a corollary of the Bush administration sparked changes both on practical as well as on the theoretical level. The acknowledgement of America's vulnerability or a grand imperial design, issued from previous devious plans or just an overreaction to shocking events, the war on terrorism has become a global public good. Not in a moral sense but in the way the expression is defined by economics: as something that affects us all whether we like it or not. As a response to the new post-9/11 American diplomacy, many countries took the syntagm „war against terror” as a paradigm containing a reality of its own and applied it how they saw fit. Whether liberal or authoritarian, governments' struggle against asymmetric agents became a tool for solving domestic problems, refashion institutions, imprison political opponents or maximize gains on the international stage. (Chossudovsky, 2005; Tarrow, 2008, 5-6; Ehteshami, 2007; Rigstad, 2009; Lipschutz, 2011, Gheorghe, 2012, 219-229)

In recent years the security landscape of South Asia has been mostly studied as the interplay between two types of factors:

- some rather exogenous such as the American intervention in Afghanistan and the potential of regional spillover; the Pakistani double-crossing game and state sponsored terrorism; the rise of China and Beijing's entanglement with all the actors; the emerging influence of other powers- such as EU's interests in the Nepalese civil war;
- other reductionist, namely the rise of India as a global power and the emphasis on such contrasting rise where impressive economic and military growth dwell near terrible social imbalances and security vulnerabilities.

What was marginally taken into consideration was India's relationship with its neighbours and the effects of the asymmetry for the South Asian stability.

In this study we aim to tell the story of SAARC (South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation) as the failure of India to exercise its role of fully-fledged regional hegemon.

As theoretical background we use Robert Gilpin's theory of regionalism and instrumentalise it for the South Asian contemporary dynamics. The starting premise affirms that India uses the American-led war on terrorism in order to enhance its own power as regional hegemon and articulate an economic sphere akin to ASEAN or the European Union. The conclusive remarks say that India's regional hegemony is rather incoherent and its impact over the neighbours bears mixed results.

The methodological underpinnings that shape, channel and limit the scope of our study come as follows:

- a state is considered to be unitary and rational, inhabited by a political elite which follows a fairly coherent diplomacy above partisan differences;
- the focal timeframe is post 9/11 although historical medallions are there to better explain causal links;
- South Asia is held to be autonomous, mostly unhindered by external actors like China or the United States.

## **SYSTEMIC CHANGE BETWEEN GLOBAL HEGEMONY AND REGIONALISM**

Interesting to Gilpin's reception in IR literature remains the way his success actually obscures other aspects of his work. Intimately associated with hegemonic stability theory, Gilpin is either confined to the pivotal book of his career- "War and change" (1981), either listed along different other authors in International Political Economy without mention of those parts of his work concerning strategic issues. By submitting him to the drawer of structural realism most of us do not bother to read the actual writings and miss the fact that Gilpin established a platform to dialogue between paradigms. Although syncretic much more than synthetic and original, Gilpinian structuralism weaves together security with political economy and allows us to further build upon the blank spaces left (Wholforth, 2011, 499-511). All the above being said, hegemonic stability theory (TSH), in spite of the name suggesting immobility, actually underpins a sociology of change. According to its tenets, both individuals, social groups and states

socialise in order to maximise their gains in an ever changing environment (Gilpin, 1981, 10-14). Each society organises itself in a oligarchical manner with a group of small actors on the top of it, therefore having a hegemonic character. The modern state emerged as hegemonic after the struggle with feudal rivals. Zooming in on the perspective, the international system ends up having one or several great powers which emerged victorious after a cataclysmic war. Postmedieval European world witnessed cyclical bids for supremacy with Portugal, Spain, Holland, Great Britain and, after 1945 the United States completing the list. Hegemons maintain peace or at least relative stability across their realm. Written after the collapse of Bretton Woods and during the oil crisis of early 1970s, Gilpin's warning, albeit scattered and implicit, tells us that the Westphalian state should not be taken for granted- its existence is constantly under threat from the waves of free market and transnational corporations, therefore sovereignty must be reaffirmed again and again (Gilpin, 1975). For the American liberal hegemony, the seeds of decay stem from its very nature: in order to endure, the primus of the system must offer some public goods (such as institutions, widely accepted norms, technology, money, a lingua franca etc.) and reward its allies before all other units (Gilpin, 1981, 53). Gilpin sees a mutual relationship between capitalism and power hierarchies- as a matter of fact only capitalist, free market states can aspire to supremacy and, in reverse, supremacy cannot be maintained in the absence of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore the USSR cannot/could not really hope to gain the crown (Gilpin, 1981, 83-84). In time, those common goods fuel the rise of other centers of power which may challenge the supremacy of the hegemon. Everything begins all over again.

Such an example is post-WWII Japan. After Washington nourished its rebuilding, Tokyo became an economic giant in its own right and recreated an Asian co-prosperity sphere unapologetically competing with Western products (albeit this time competition has a benign face and is limited to the commercial realm (Gilpin, 1999, 30-35).

One cannot help but notice a dialectical process in which primacy (thesis) fosters its own antithesis and makes possible a new grand scale conflict to rearrange systemic hierarchies. To be fair, Gilpin's pessimism does not go all the way and contemplates an open ended future with low probability for another hegemonic war due to three factors: 1) nuclear weapons which climb the price of victory to an unacceptable range; 2) economic interdependence; 3) instant communications which help tame the security dilemma (Gilpin, 1981, 220-245). Although worst case scenario did not have its day and nuclear Holocaust fail to materialise USA, as the uncontested actor after 1991, may still fall victim to its own hubris and misread the perils. As a critique of Bush doctrine, Gilpin accused Washington of power hungry behaviour which might bring dire consequences

Gilpin, 2005, 5-18). He considers that the war against terrorism commits national resources to never ending goals and speeds up decline.<sup>1</sup>

### **REGIONAL TURN AND GRAND THEORY**

With the end of the Cold War and the waning away of global superpower competition other actors came to the fore. A new propensity towards regionalism dubbed the overall trend of globalisation in order to prove that interdependence is especially intense within smaller, subglobal geographical settings (Kumar, 2004, 173-175; Ollapally, 2004, 117-119; Hurrell, 2007; Prys, 2010, 1). European Community/Union, GATT, MERCOSUR, Arab League, ASEAN, the Visegrad Group, pre-dating 1990 or created shortly after, established an intermediate level between national states and the international system writ large. As a consequence, the IR literature grew a taste for area studies reflecting the limits of grand-scale theories.<sup>2</sup> Supplementary, the post-Western turn in the field of IR boosted the effort to find alternative paradigms or at least to accommodate established scholarship to geocultural sensibilities. (Acharya, 2007; Acharya and Buzan, 2010; Ikeda, 2010, 29-44)

Writing throughout the 1990s, Gilpin himself takes up the question of regionalism. Without formulating an overall explanatory scheme he suffices to notice that there is not one size-fits-all formula and instead dwells upon different stories of regional integration: GATT and NAFTA in the Western hemisphere, European Community and Japan's ripples in Southeastern Asia, as already mentioned.

Bearing in mind all of the above, Miriam Prys builds upon previous writings on TSH and contemplates ways to adjust grand scale theory to regional settings. For Prys one can talk about regional hegemony only if some requirements are fulfilled: 1) at least more than two states geographically close to each other; 2)

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most fertile hypothesis suggested by Gilpin is the question of hegemonic bullying. Everything comes down to the question: what happens if the predominant actor of the system does not settle with status quo and craves for enhanced power/wealth/territories/resources/influence? During the '80s as well as in 2005 he writes down the issue but without giving it further consideration and without fitting it in the wider frame (Gilpin, 1982: 182-183; Gilpin, 2005, 5-18). One could reconcile Gilpin two contrary positions by envisioning hegemonic stability theory as having two levels: on the one hand the hegemon provides general goods and on the other he exploits certain regions. Recrafting Alexander Wendt now famous dictum one may say that hegemony is what hegemon makes of it. For a critique of American foreign policy as being inconsistent with hegemonic stability see: (Layne, 2006, 7-41; Drezner, 2009; Bozdağlıoğlu, 2013 )

<sup>2</sup> It has to be noticed that regional turn is not necessarily something original, completely uncovered by previous research. Those who read carefully Gilpin-Kindleberger model will discover that hegemonic stability theory, in spite of its systemic width, started and remained a regional theory. Both Gilpin and Kindleberger speak about an European system of state/balance of power which grows bit by bit until swallows the entire inhabited world. Even for present times when capitalism and Western cultural influence send ripples everywhere, Gilpinian hegemonic stability mostly refers to Western Europe and Japan, the geography of American WWII victory. The rest of the world is marginally spoken of. Summing up: regional turn not only adds up to TSH but makes those extra steps neglecting by mainstream IR literature during Cold War haydays.

those states should consider themselves as being part of a certain region; 3) outside actors should define a region as such. A regional hegemon appears when a state is 1') so much powerful than those surrounding it (in economic, geographic, militar, cultural terms etc); 2) is willing to play the role of the leader, take responsibilities/provide certain common goods and 3') is accepted as such by its neighbours. (Prys 2007, 5-6; Prys, 2010, 10-13)

Just as Gilpin before her, Prys contends that " *regional powers, consequently, cannot be treated as actors that, ceteris paribus, behave in a uniform manner and the actual behavior of these <regional powers> thus shows variation that has so far been neither properly understood nor conceptualized.*" (Prys, 2010, 3; Prys, 2012, 2)

As we remain faithful to the premise that TSH is useful at regional level, we bring closer both authors<sup>3</sup> and ask if the regional hegemon confines itself to assuring its dominant position and extracting resources from the neighbours or goes further and tries to impose its own domestic economic model upon them as precondition for regional integration (in the manner the US did in post-WWII days with Western Europe and especially in Japan). (Fordham, 1998; Rittershausen, 2007; Prys, 2010, 15; Ito, 2011; Prys, 2012, 5)

Bellow we are to investigate how India's predominance/hegemony has been linked to its neighbours from the early Independence years towards the present.

#### South Asia: an intermestic balance of power

Present day regional system of South Asia, for most of its part, has resulted from the disintegration of the British Raj. With the advent of decolonisation under the pressure of different nationalist movements, the subcontinent's political unity crumbled to different freshly independent states. Even before the British departure, subcurrents within the nationalist movements entailed different scenarios, not all complementary with one another. Their growing animosity did not herald a unitary path for an independent India. For example, Congress Party leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Vabhallai Patel or Jawaharlal Nehru desired a secular country, whereas the Muslim League patronised by Mohammed Ali Jinah feared an apartheid where Muslims will be downgraded to second class citizens and envisaged a haven for all the worshipers of the Koran. After the common enemy vanished along with Lord Mountbatten, all those latent issues turned to manifest feuds. Partition de-institutionalised the greatest divide in Indian identity, namely the Hindu vs Muslim one, → which would/should have been solved within the same political boundaries, via parliamentarism became a regional system of states trapped by an exhausting balance of power. From that moment on we can speak about four kinds of conflicts rattling South Asia: 1) between states, mostly between

<sup>3</sup> Worthy of notice that Miriam Prys lists several angles about conceptualisation of hegemony, from Realism to Neo-Gramscianism or World System Theory but does not mention Gilpin or the ability of his TSH to blend plural perspectives and surpass that structural determinism she accuses at Realism. (Prys, 2012, 22-26)

India and Pakistan, eventually with the help of other neighbours forced to attend this local Cold War; 2) between different ethno-religious groups; 3) between states and non-state actors, such as regional parties, ethno-religious communities with different grievances or terrorist networks; 4) last but not least about the balance between modernity and tradition as a philosophical frame encapsulating all of the above (Bose, Jalal, 2004, 4-8; Taroor, 2006; Taroor, 2007; Taroor, 2008). It goes without saying that all the above mentioned levels are interlinked.

From the very onset, India's self narrative was spelled around the word *swaraj* (self-rule, independence). Loosely defined but imbued with a strong sense of prestige, the Indian quest for independence had two basic tenets:

- on the home front: building a prosperous and secure nation;
- on the international stage: pragmatic engagement with other states to the extent those relationships in order to enhanced power and prestige. (Taroor, 2008, 189-192)

Wordly affairs followed a successive number of concentric horizons: a leaning towards China and other developing countries (the Non-Alignment Movement) doubled by an intimate relationship with Russia (from both ideological and military interest) and supplemented tripled by the friendship with the United States and the other Western nations (Cohen, 2001, 38-39).<sup>4</sup> The first to crumble was the Sino-Indian alliance in 1962. In this case Here Nehru based his top diplomatic pillar on the belief that India and China, as the world's oldest civilizations shared common goals, confronted similar economic challenges therefore understanding should come naturally. In reality, Cold War power politics ; Chinese dissatisfaction with the Tibetan border as well as the irritation of Beijing's elite regarding what they considered to be Nehruvian arrogance exploded in the 1962 conflict. (Cohen, 2001, 42, 275)

The relationship with the United States in the first twenty years of the Cold War balanced a shared vocation for English language and a Westminster-inspired political culture with more material interests. From the American point of view, Washington should assist a fellow democracy against the Communist block and provide technological means, such was those embodied in the Atoms for Peace program. For the Indian nuclear program American and Canadian willingness to share latest technology was a chance not to be missed. Nehru and his friend, scientist Homi Bhaba were searching to modernise their nations by providing nurturing electricity to impoverished masses (Cohen, 2001, 157-159). The relationship broke down in the early 1960s when the US, the USSR and the other UNSC permanent members signed the NPT: Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, committing themselves to oppose future sharing of military nuclear technology or against the birth of other nuclear powers apart from them. Having being wounded

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<sup>4</sup> For a brief description of India's engagement with Non-Alignment as well as its activity with the UN see: (Kesavan, 2005, 9-21).

Although Non-alignment became India's mark on the world stage, New Delhi's diplomats actually excelled at bilateral bargains more than in multilateralism settings. For a critique of bilateralism and multilateralism see (Mukherjee and Malone, February 4, 2011).

in its pride India rejected the NPT as a nuclear apartheid and chose to run a civil nuclear test in 1974.

The Washington - New Delhi relationship was at its lowest with Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger on the one hand and Indira Gandhi on the other personalizing deep distrust between two diplomatic cultures at odds. Bridges were to be mended only after 1991 and especially after 2001. (Kronstadt, Pinto, 2012; Curtis, 2012)

## **MOVES TOWARDS NEIGHBOURHOOD**

### Pakistan

Surely India's relationship with Pakistan remains the most troubling. Blueprinted in the early 1930s as a brainchild of the Muslim League, Pakistan was envisaged to be home for South Asia's Muslim population (Schofield, 2010, 21). Emerging from a violent partition, both countries would soon embark on a spiral of violence nourished with each new clash (Cohen, 2001, 199). Their enmity stemmed from opposite identities enforcing one another: from the Indian point of view, its Northwestern neighbour presents itself as an omnium gatherum of fears- a unstable theocracy where civilian political life has been constantly overthrown by praetorianism/ while from the Pakistani point of view India offers a scapegoat for 1) its city under siege mentality, 2) close relationship with terrorist cells and 3) exaggerated military expenditure. Unfortunately for long term regional stability, South Asia was never realpolitik-free and instead played an important part during the Cold War. Nuclearisation raised even higher the perils of conflict, as was to be seen in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In May 1998 India and Pakistan entertained mirrored nuclear tests and declared themselves full-fledged atomic states. One year later, in 1999 Pakistan initiated the fourth conflict against India as militant infiltrators crossed the Kashmiri border only to be seconded by a massive offensive of Pakistani regular armed forces. The stake could not have been higher as the United States was obliged to step forth in one that had the potential to materialise the Cold War's worst case scenarios. In spite of Bill Clinton's visit to both embattled twins in 2000 and Richard Hoolbroke's good will shuttle diplomacy, the Indo-Pakistani border remained on the brink of an all out confrontation until late 2001. Later, the regime of general Pervez Musharaff and New Delhi's Prime Minister, Atal Biharee Vajpae seemed eager to turn the page and work together towards apeace. (Cohen, 2001, 202-221) The upward trend did not last very long. India experienced its own 9/11 when several die-hard terrorist attacked central Mumbai on November 26, 2008 causing more than 160 victims. Traces pointed towards Pakistan-based Lashkar e Taiba (The Army of the Pure), hailed by some as the new Al Qaeda. (Malone, 2011, 57)

### Bangladesh

When Pakistan broke from India in August 1947 to find its own independent destiny, the new state resembled a geographical improbability. Its Western part was isolated from the Eastern part by more than 1000 km of Indian

land. Artificially created with Islamic ideology as the sole cement, the two halves would soon grow apart and not only in physical distance. A Bengali speaking Eastern half accused Karachi of favoring the West and promoting a selective growth policy. With divergences accumulating, Eastern Pakistan decided to secede from Karachi, gesture soon to be followed by civil war in 1971. When as much as one million of disenfranchised Bengali nationals poured over Indian borders amassing havoc, Indira Gandhi sent the troops to solve the growing humanitarian crisis and also to weaken the long time archrival (Cohen, 2001, 211).<sup>5</sup> From a symbolic perspective it was a clear-cut victory: Pakistani claim to represent a Muslim home was proved wrong while the Indian project was rewarded by history. Unfortunately, in spite of India's godfatherhood, Dhaka-New Delhi bilateralism has known many ups and downs. One reason is Bangladesh's fundamentalists who sympathised with Islamabad's policies (Riaz, 2003, 301-310); the second concerns New Delhi-Dhaka alone: namely disputes about Bangladeshi immigrants who cross Indian border illegally at the risk of being shot on site as well as feuds about splitting common rivers.

In recent years the pro-secular and pro-Indian government of Sheikh Hasina has worked to improve diplomatic ties but the near future still holds many surprises as Bangladesh has stepped in 2014 marred by social and political turmoil. (Roy, Borsha, 2013, 87-97) Mrs. Hasina's measures, even before sweeping the polls in early January, were followed by several sentences in two high profile cases. The first one concerned those Bangladeshis who sided with the Pakistani armed forces during the war of independence. Amongst them, Abdul Quader Mollah, religious leader of Jamaat Islamiya was put to death, a gesture which caused ripples in both Bangladesh and Pakistan where hundreds mourned his passing. (The Express Tribune, December 19, 2013; Mohan, 19 December, 2013)

The other case regards Chittagong arms haul in April 2004. There the Bangladeshi police discovered a huge arms transport meant for ULFA, a terrorist organisation from Northeastern India. Controversies arose when rumors about Pakistani ISI and Bangladeshi intelligence collusion signaled higher political interest with an anti-Indian agenda ( Datta, March 9, 2009). In 2014 several former government officials involved in the affair were indicted and convicted to the death penalty.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It has to be completed with the fact that Indian authorities did not stand still and watched Pakistan unravelling. Intelligence institutions played an active role in arming the Mukti Bahini, a rebel organisation based in East Pakistan which fought for secession. (Kasturi, 1995, 42)

<sup>6</sup> Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, then-industry minister of Bangladesh; the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's Lutfur Zaman Babar, then-minister of state for home; two ex-chiefs of NSI, generals Abdur Rahim and Rezakul Haider Chowdhury; former industry secretary Nurul Amin and Ulfa's military chief Paresh Barua compound the list of those awarded death sentence. (The Economic Times, 6 February, 2014)

## Nepal

The birthplace of Buddha, the former kingdom of Nepal (now a republic) was never subdued to British power or Indian Union after 1947. In 1950 both countries signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship which basically handed over Nepalese external policy to the Indian bigger brother. As time passed by, Kathmandu, although acknowledging Delhi's overwhelming predominance over the Himalayan kingdom, tried either to act as a neutral spot between China and India and sometimes even tilted toward Beijing, begrudging Rashina Hill. (Cohen, 2001, 234; Bhattarai, 2005, 7-10; Malone, 2011, 115-116)

In 1989 India tried to impose on Nepal a new water treaty, considered unacceptable and enslaving by Kathmandu. After three decades of authoritarian rule the king had to choose between giving in to Delhi's demands or reenergise his home popularity by allowing once again political parties to function. The Nepalese parliamentary stage not only captured the alphabet of pluralism but actually degenerated into a Weimerian 1930s type of chaos. 1996 became referential, as the the Nepalese Maoist Party', the most radical anti-systemic outfit, ignited revolt against the monarchy and all other parliamentary parties, with everything spiraling in a civil war.

India's attitude towards the Nepalese civil war was deemed to be ambivalent. At first the Indian secret services capacitated the Maoists as a leverage against the monarchy. Afterwards when they became stronger and colluded with Indian Maoists, New Delhi switched sides and offered weapons and military trainers to the Nepalese Royal Army. (Global Security; Verma, 2001, 31; Mazari, 1999; Kasturi and Mehra, 2001; Raman, 2007; Raman, 27 Apr , 2013)<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, as king Birendra was forced to abdicate amidst popular uprising, the Maoists agreed to renounce armed struggle and replace bullets with ballots. Given the circumstances, Manmohan Singh's government focused on brokering the Nepalese Maoists' integration into civil life and regular armed forces. (Malone, 2011, 116-117)

## Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's symmetry to Nepal is not only geographical but wraps also political features. Similar to India, Lanka's diversity, especially the one opposing the Sinhalese majority to Tamils cradled the civil war (1983-2009). Just like in Nepal, Indian military and intelligence garnered support for the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) (Suryanarayan, 5 January, 2001; Ramachandran, 26 March, 2004). After Rajiv Gandhi succeeded his mother in 1984, Delhi's stance watered down realpolitik with a more peacekeeping attitude. In 1987 a 10.000-strong Indian contingent laid foot in Sri Lanka to ensure armistice and broker peace. Contrary to

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<sup>7</sup> A Nepalese citizen told the author in Leuven, Belgium (2012) how India uses/used "an army called RAW" to create havoc and pursue different aims in Nepal- most probably he was referring to Research and Analysis Wing, India's main intelligence agency, but did not further elaborate whether the activities of RAW changed over the years and especially after 2001 or after the demise of the monarchy.

what was planned, Indian soldiers became embroiled in a mayhem they could not fully understand. After loosing 1.000 men, they retreated in 1991 from what had become India's Vietnam (Pfaffenberger, 1988, 143; Waduge, 2008). Thereupon New Delhi chose to keep a low profile vis-a-vis Sri Lankan domestic turmoil (Cohen, 2001, 240). Only after 2009, with the election of Mahinda Rajapaksa for presidency (2005), a staunch anti-LTTE candidate, Rashina Hill supported Colombo's military build-up which eventually led to the final defeat of the Tigers. As peace settled once more over the island, Indian implication was dual: on the one hand it was involved in the reconstruction effort; one the other, Manomohan Singh endorsed the USA's critique of president Rajapaksa's poor human rights record on several occasions. (Kumar, 27 March, 2008; The Times of India, 21 March, 2008; Manoharan, 18 July 2013). In recent months, however, Delhi seems to have switched and became more friendly towards Rajapaksa regime in order to alienate Colombo and place it in the arms of China. (Kumar, March 27, 2014; Bagchi, 28 March, 2014)

### Bhutan and Maldives

Descending from small to smaller, Bhutan and Maldives present some interesting similarities accompanied by sharp contrasts. The former is a landlocked Himalayan Buddhist state while the latter is a Muslim island in the Indian Ocean thriving out of tourism. Long before the advent of XX century, the Bhutanese monarchy came to orbit in Britain's sphere of influence. The First Anglo-Bhutanese conflict took place in 1772 for the control of the Cooch Behar region. Later, in 1864/'65 and 1910 Bhutan acknowledged British predominance over its foreign policy receiving instead a pledge of non-interference from the Europeans. Asymmetry will continue to have its way in relations to Indian republic after 1947.

Domestic matters followed similar patterns to what happened in neighbouring Nepal, namely the struggle between absolute and constitutional monarchy. Between 1976-1981 king Jigme Singye Wangchuck presided over an ambitious process to decentralize the country, followed by the creation of a Council of Ministers and new laws that lifted the ban over television and Internet in late 1990s. First general parliamentary elections took place in 2008.

Two facts poisoned the calm of the smallish kingdom:

- first was with co-Hymalaian Nepal. Favoured by geographic proximity, many Nepalese descendants called Ngolop found a home in Bhutan. As they thrived, Thimpu started chipping away their civic rights and banished them through all kind of means;
- second was in regard to India's radical organisations. In 1990 and 1991 the Indian security forces rammed over two Bodo outfits: United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Many took refuge in Bhutan where they took pause and tried to organise their come back. Thimpu tried to persuade their leave through negotiations and diplomatic means, all ending in failure. In 2003, after several years of growing dismay with the unwanted

foreigners, the Bhutanese Royal Army smoked them out in what was called Operation Clear-All. (Banerjee, 18 December, 2003; Banerjee, Laishram, 2004)

At the other extreme of South Asia, the Maldivian atoll can easily elude a roving eye set only on bigger power dynamics. Basking in its former glory when it was revered as Malabar- a hub on the maritime cartography of spice, the present day inhabitants of the Maldives earn their living out of tourism. In 1948, the year of Sri Lankan independence, Britain signed an agreement with the sultan of Maldives granting permission to use a military base. The agreement was renewed in 1956; in 1971 the island was finally taken into possession by Maldivians themselves. In 1953 the sultan was replaced after a coup. Interregnum lasted for more than a decade. National unity came only with the life presidency of Mamoun Abdul Gayoom, 1978-2008 (Singh, 2012). In 2008 Mohammed Nasheed, human rights activist defeats Gayoom in open elections and replaces him. Nasheed's tenure was marked by turmoil and corruption scandals (India Today, 14 February, 2012; Burke, 22 October 2012). What is more worrisome is Maldives becoming a hotbed for Islamic terrorism, after two high profile blasts shook the peaceful resort in late September 2007 followed by religiously inspired acts of vandalism against public monuments and Hindu symbols. (Roul, 26 April, 2013)

Modern diplomatic relations with India have been officially inaugurated at some point in 1960s. In 1975 Indira Gandhi visited Maldives to sign a maritime border treaty. The climax of bilateral intensity came in 1988 as a fallout from the Sri Lankan civil war. At that time, two businessmen, Abdullah Luthufi and Sagar Nasir, helped by a small contingent of 150 Tamils tried to depose president Gayoom, forcing Indian troops to act swiftly and restore status-quo (Gupta, 9 February, 2012). Since 2009 the Indian presence felt stronger as New Delhi became involved in shaping the post-Gayoom political arena and in backing up different businessmen embroiled in controversial affairs on the island (Sharma, 5 December, 2012). At the military level New Delhi and Maldives signed a Cooperative Agreement which allows the installment of several radars. (IDSA, 2012)

#### SAARC: a form in search of a substance

Up to this point we have assessed the security-diplomatic affairs from a state-centric perspective, more so from an Indo-centric perspective and left the regional institutional framework marginal.

Created in 1985, the SAARC Charter was signed by heads of states of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Dhaka.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kishore Dash traces the birth of SAARC to the initiatives of Bangladeshi president Ziaur Rahman in late 1970. Apparently his motives were: 1) he needed Indian friendship to legitimise his rule; 2) to craft a platform between South Asian leaders might so as increase regional resistance against external pressures, many of which caused by Cold War dynamics; 3) to enmesh India in a set of agreements in order to limit its hegemonic position amongst the neighbours; 3) relax protectionism between South Asian nations and promote instead laissez-faire attitudes; 4) take advantage of Jimmy Carter's aid policies towards the region.

Supplementary to the Charter a series of additional organisms or initiatives took shape in the last twenty-eight years: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set up in 1992; SAARC Preferential Trade Arrangement Agreement-SAPTA (signed in April 1993; entered into force in December 1995). At the January 2004 summit meeting, SAARC countries' foreign ministers signed the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement (scheduled to become operational by 2006). (Ahmed, 2008, 3) In April 2007 SAARC 14th meeting agreed to create a SAARC Development Fund, establish the South Asian University, establish a SAARC Food Bank and set up the SAARC Arbitration Council. (Ahmed, 2008, 4)

Unfortunately all the above listed steps remain more or less a diplomatic game of society without real consequences for regional amalgamation as one may see in the case of ASEAN, not to say the EU.

### **WAR ON TERRORISM AND NATION BUILDING**

9/11 and its aftermath were seen as the obituary of the Westphalian world with all its subsequent connotations. In a geographical sense, the American-led effort blended with South Asia's security environment. Washington, New Delhi and Islamabad (along with smaller regional actors) compounded a triangle of interests, tensions and many zero-sum outcomes.

Most critics of the controversial paradigm "war on terrorism" emphasise at least three items: a) it is semantically fluid with dire consequences for public policies design to fight against terrorism; b) it is very expensive and commits astronomical costs; c) it curtails individual freedoms without a clear hope or victory. The American-led experience in Afghanistan and other secondary fronts proves the above statements.

For South Asia 2001 had a meaning of its own as India experienced the bombing of the Parliament caused by terrorist with Pakistani allegiance; in Nepal crown prince Dipendra killed his parents and last but not least the creation of CCOMPOSA hailed the maturing of Indian Maoists along with their ability to meet on a platform with like-minded subcontinental terrorist networks. The Maoist insurgency would evolve to be India's single greatest internal threat, in the words of Manmohan Singh (2006).

For India, war on terrorism colluded the threat to its domestic integrity with the chance to maximise power, mostly by using the alliance with the United States. Security unfolded as an equation with nation-building and regional hegemony as parameters/, and wealth, power, prestige, institutions or good governance as the main variables. On this continuum the Indian war on terrorism meant: a) enactment of new laws; b) creation of better security agencies ; c)

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In pursuit of his dream, Ziaur Rahman first went to Indian prime-minister at that time, Morarji Desai, in December 1997. Afterwards he turned to Nepali monarch during the inaugural meeting of Colombo Plan Consultative Committee. The two of them were to further meet in Dhaka, January 1978. Non-Aligned Movement sessions proved to be fertile occasion to socialise the idea and gain new followers. Critical mass would be achieved only after Srilankan president, J.R.Jayawardene became involved in the blueprint. (Dash, 1996, 186-187)

military action against different terrorist networks and guerillas; d) a massive military build-up beyond the need of counterinsurgency.

a) India's decade long experience against different insurgencies generated a dozen of laws both at the national as well as states level.<sup>9</sup> Within the context of daunting threats and international counterinsurgency-friendly attitudes a debate emerged about the government's abuses. It was the case of POTA- Prevention of Terrorist Act, 2002 which was passed by BJP and afterwards repelled by the Congress coalition in 2004 due to human rights infringements. (Curtis, 2008, 4)

SAARC's potential as a multilateral platform was not ignored. Even since the seminal summit in Dhaka, 1985, political leaders acknowledged among others the perils posed by the spread of terrorism. A Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism translated worries into a legal instrument. An additional Protocol to the convention was signed at Islamabad in 2004. Also, during the same summit Southasian leaders endorsed their support for UN resolution 1373 which condemns all manifestation of terrorist activities. On February 2009 during one SAARC council of ministers meeting the "Cooperation and Combating terrorism" initiative was adopted.

At the bilateral basis Indian and Pakistani leaders pledged to create a Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism (JATM) in 2006. The Initiative is considered to have ended in failure. (Thapa in Kumar, 2012, 138)<sup>10</sup>

Apart from declarations of good will, there seems to have been rather shallow interrregional cooperation on the matter,<sup>11</sup> although one cannot dismiss Indian support for Bhutanese Clear-All operation, military equipment send for the Nepalese Royal Army and later for Srilankan forces or intelligence sharing with Bangladeshi authorities. (some of those already mentioned above).

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<sup>9</sup> Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act 1953; Prevention Detention (Continuance) Act 1957; Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Act 1958; Nagaland Security Regulation 1962; Assam Preventive Detention Act 1980; Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) 1983 Special Powers Act 1983; Punjab Disturbed Areas Act 1983; National Security (Amendment) Act 1988 (originally enacted in 1980); Chandigarh Disturbed Areas (Amendment) Act 1989; Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special powers Act 1990; Extradition (Amendment Act) 1993 (originally enacted in 1962); SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism Act) 1993; Anti-Hijacking (Amendment) Act 1994 (originally enacted in 1982); Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Civil Aviation (Amendment) Act 1994; Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Act 2002; Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002; Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act 2008 (originally enacted in 1967). (Felix in Kumar, 2012, 72)

<sup>10</sup> JATM met three time. First was in March 2007 in the backdrop of Samjhotha Express blasts and was used to define the parameters of cooperation between sides. Second meeting (October 22, 2007) busied itself with sharing details although prior to it officials from both Islamabad and Delhi traded mutual accusations. Third meeting of JATM took place in Islamabad, June 28, 2008 in the backdrop of the Kabul blast of Indian Embassy. After Mumbai 26/11 2008 India has retreated from the Mechanism. (Fayyaz, 2009)

<sup>11</sup> It is worthwhile to note that several of the authors involved with IDSA's report frequently employ the moniker <regional cooperation> they provide only limited examples on the matter. See in this regard (S.D. Muni, in Kumar, 2012, 28; Kumar in Kumar, 2012, 118-128)

**b)** New rules were followed by new institutions. In this respect 2002 saw the creation of Defense Intelligence Agency with the aim to gather inputs from different other agencies and departments. A new body- namely the National Investigation Agency-NIA was installed in the aftermath of 26/11 to better handle different sorts of crimes. (Asthana, 2010)

**c)** The History of Indian counterinsurgency is older than Independence itself. Thereupon British leaving the subcontinent, different communities contested New Delhi's authority and took arms to gain more autonomy or even outright independence. Telangana, Naga and first Maoists/Naxalite rebellions burst from the early 1950s to early 1970s (Cohen, 2001, 113). Afterwards, 1980s-1990s Punjab and Kashmir broke loose enmeshing India's internal predicaments with external environment. Especially in the latter's case, as the Afghan front lost its centrality, many jobless mujaheddins came to Northeastern Indian to fight other battles in the great cause of Islam (Human Rights Watch, 1994, 3-6). Militancy scaled down in mid 1990s only to increase yet again after 1997/1998 thus following Indo-Pakistani border tensions. (Victoria Schofield, 2010, 150-160, 180-188)

After 2004 the Naxalite movement was reborn. Crafted from several previous groups, the unified Maoists enthroned themselves in India's Central-Eastern states such as Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh. Predominantly confined to the poorest rural tribal communities (the Adivasi), the Naxalits envisage to take down New Delhi and replace existing order with a classless society. In the early 2000s Indian and Nepali Maoists joined hands within CCOMPOSA, but after the later made peace with the postmonarchic political class in Kathmandu, they parted ways.<sup>12</sup>

**d)** With a defence budget soon to pass the \$40 billion threshold, India has become world's most avid importer of military hardware of all types, from small weapons to high calibre tanks, fighter jets and top-notch electronic surveillance. According to SIPRI India bought \$12.7 billion, while China's only \$6.3 billion between 2007-2011. Tens of billion\$ were spent and are still on the pipe for high profile acquisitions. (Kumar, 21 March, 2012). Delhi's civil-military elites feel eager to comit toward martial endeavours due to an overall robust budget out of which defence counts for  $\pm 2\%$ . To consider that American defence budget hovers around 4% out of the federal budget. See table 1.

## **A DECADE OF COUNTERRORISM. AN ASSESSEMENT**

In the same vein, India's decade-long engagement with non-conventional threats shows mixed results. We shall make the assessment on two layers- political and military:

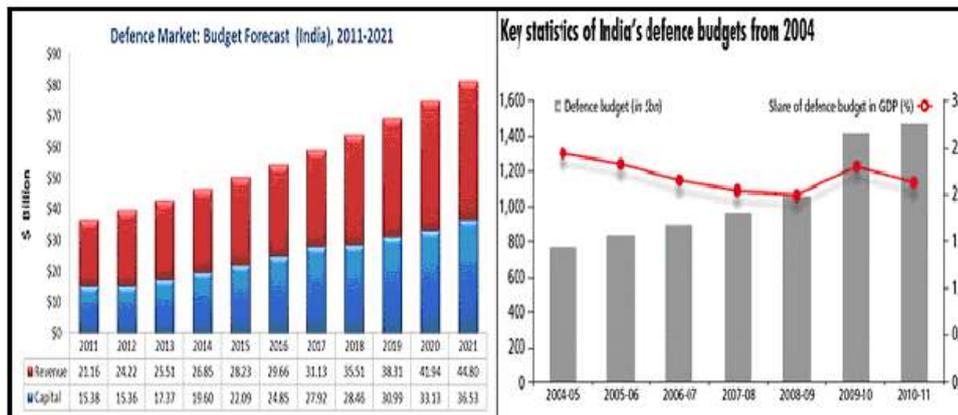
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<sup>12</sup> Discussion with Bert Suykens, Naxalite expert and researcher at the Center for Third World Studies, Ghent University, May 2012

The political layer:

Here we encompass both institution building and law enactment. One of the ironies of bloated bureaucracies is their inefficiency. Overstaffing and poor organization tend to become a liability when confronted with high-speed problems. Thus, India's security institutions (either police, armed forces or intelligence) display the same general features like all civil institutions. With all the reform steps taken after Kargil, the security apparatus remains rather re-active than proactive, with shallow communication between departments, unfit budgets for their needs, in spite of their impressive dimension. (Asthana, 2010, 8 and passim)

**Table 1**



**Source (from left to right):** (Sharma, 26 March, 2012; Peeyiush, 17 February, 2011)

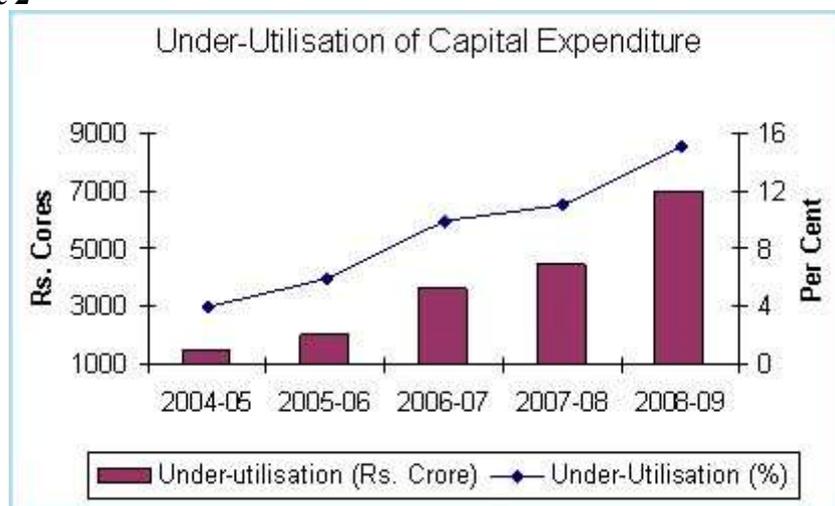
The military layer:

India's military modernisation spree catches both ambitions along with fears and institutional yokes of an aspiring superpower. The shopping spree mentioned above should not be seen as a function of a lavish economic miracle but more of a mask for the inefficiencies of the R&D sector and the domestic industrial base (Chellaney, 14 January 2014). DRDO- Defence and Research Organisation-India's top defence scientific forum is well known for its opaque budgets, nepotism and meager results in more than thirty years of activity.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Established in 1958 DRDO grew to a network of 5,000 laboratories with 5,000 scientists and 25,000 support personnel. A bustling activity scattered unto circa 1,000 projects can easily impress the shallow look, but achievements fall short behind, say numerous critics. In the last 30 years, Armed Forces has used only 17% of DRDO production. VK Mittal, former agency researcher gave an inside view: "DRDO technology is almost two decades old. Two projects, namely *Samyukta* and *Sangraha* electronic warfare equipment, were partially inducted in the armed forces, but users felt these were outdated and more expensive than the latest technology available." An investigation ordered in 2008

The acquisition process is also marred by numerous predicaments. In spite of supplementary figures added from one year to another larger and larger sums of money remain underutilised—a true carnival of administrative waste. Beside the above table of defence trends, another comes to mirror the empty half of the glass:

**Table 2**



**Source:** (Behera, February 18, 2009)

Military modernisation remains capital and technologically intensive and less human oriented. Money is invested for strategic hardware (tanks, planes, ballistics) and much less for improving the quality of average policeman/paramilitary/ jawan (soldier). A growth in suicide rates for the paramilitary along with lack of motivation for young persons to join the ranks proves the point.<sup>14</sup>

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(Rama Rao Committe) by defence ministry, AK Antony confirmed what press and analysts had said long time before. (Pubby, May 14, 2010; Yadav and Dahiya, 02 September, 2012; Petre, 2012; Mohanty, 2014)

In September 2013 a new director general of DRDO was appointed, Dr Avinash Chander- endowed with the mission to make reforms and increase institutional efficiency. (Shukla, September 12, 2013)

It remains to be seen if all those steps should have any impact. In February 2013 minister Antony announced that six major projects bearing DRDO stamp are delayed. Amongst them the light combat airplane Tejas, initially scheduled for launch in 2014, now delayed until December 2015. (The Economic Times, Feb 5, 2013)

<sup>14</sup> Between 2001-2011 1330 soldiers committed suicide, out of which Army counted for 1.056 of them, a staggering majority. (Ramachandran, December 04, 2013)

One should not get the impression that lack of money is the only cause or even the main cause of growing suicide rates. Recent defence budgets allocate most money to personnel revenue. For example 2014-2015 interim defence budget climbs to Rs 224.000 crore (US\$ 37,15 billion), an increase of 9,98% which mostly adds up to revenue expenditure such as pensions. (Behera, February 23, 2014)

Several studies along with superior officers list among suicide motives lack of advancement perspectives for individual soldiers, poor management, humiliation and land troubles back home.

After the last major scandal regarding defence procurement- January 2013 (Augusta-Westland affairs) the defence ministry, AK Antony took measures to modify equipment procurement as to loosen state control and bring forth Indian defence market. (Petre, April 2013; Suman, 09 Sep , 2013)

Most importantly, all the deficiencies are reflected in the mixed results of all counterinsurgent operations. If one takes only the degree of Maoist menace as a sample he/she will find few causes for optimism. On the one hand statistics show the curbing of Naxalite-related attacks/victims. On the other hand descendant trends may not be irreversible but part of a cyclical pattern. Tables 3, 4 and 5 compile figures taken from South Asia Terrorism Portal (satp.org):

**Table 3****Cumulative Fatalities by Conflict Theatres: 2005-2013**

Years	Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)	Insurgency in North East (NE)	Left Wing Extremism	Punjab	Islamist Extremism outside J&K, NE & Punjab	Hindutva Extremism outside J&K, NE and Punjab	Other Extremism outside J&K, NE	Total
2005	1739	717	717	0	73	0	13	3259
2006	1116	637	737	0	230	40	10	2770
2007	777	1036	650	7	59	81	5	2615
2008	541	1051	648	0	369	7	3	2619
2009	375	852	997	0	5	0	3	2232
2010	375	322	1180	4	21	0	0	1902
2011	183	246	602	0	42	0	0	1073
2012	117	316	367	2	1	0	0	803
2013	47	84	224	0	17	0	1	373
<b>Total*</b>	<b>5270</b>	<b>5261</b>	<b>6122</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17646</b>

The present landscape seems to point towards 1) clustering pockets of insurgency as against previous years when police had to confront a national coordination (even supranational if we take into account Indian-Nepali Maoist nexus) (Fellman, Nelson, Sanderson, Samok, Wise, 2013, 30-38); 2) a shift towards high profile targets such as the killing of Mahendra Karma, creator of Salwa Judum, a progovernment militia recruited to fight Naxalism at grass root levels. (Kaiser, May 26, 2013; Joseph John, May 30, 2013)

At the regional level an Indian-led counterterrorism effort has stumbled in the Islamabad-Delhi traditional rivalry, although some confidence building measure were taken by general Musharaff and Manmohan Singh.

Overall, we can see a decline of terrorist-related fatalities but with some hotspots in Pakistan and Bangladesh showing that the momentum might be reversed:<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Around the moment of our writing (March 2014) Bangladesh stands on the brink of social turmoil with Islamist shades while Indo-Pakistani conundrum displays an ambivalent landscape: on the one

**Table 4**

<b>South Asia Fatalities 2005-2013</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Civilians</b>	<b>SFs</b>	<b>Terrorists</b>	<b>Total</b>
2005	2063	920	3311	6294
2006	2803	1725	4504	9032
2007	3128	1504	6145	10777
2008	3653	2342	14632	20627
2009	14197	2738	12703	29638
2010	2571	844	6016	9431
2011	3173	962	3284	7419
2012	3270	871	2902	7043
2013	1925	458	1365	3748
<b>Total*</b>	<b>36783</b>	<b>12364</b>	<b>54862</b>	<b>104009</b>

\* Data till June 16, 2013

**Table 5**

<b>Bangladesh: Fatalities-Islamist Terrorism 2005 - 2013</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Civilians</b>	<b>SFs</b>	<b>Terrorists</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2005</b>	26	0	9	35
<b>2006</b>	6	0	6	12
<b>2007</b>	1	0	7	8
<b>2008</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>2009</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>2010</b>	3	0	3	6
<b>2011</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>2012</b>	1	0	2	3
<b>2013</b>	109	13	66	188
<b>Total*</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>253</b>

\*Data till June 16, 2013

**Source:** South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP),<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/database/Fatalities-Islamist%20Terrorism%202010.htm>

hand Islamabad's new PM, Nawaz Shariff languishes a conciliatory rhetoric towards India while at the same time the number of Pakistani militants crossing the border has increased. (Deccan Herald, Jan 19, 2014)

According to SATP portal „The trend of a sustained decline in terrorism-related fatalities since the year 2001, was reversed in 2013, with J&K recording 181 fatalities, as compared to 117 in 2012, a steep rise of 54.70 per cent.” State Director General of Police, Ashok Prasad states that “the *“militants have started targeting SFs [security forces] as part of their changed strategy to increase the violence graph”*. The number of militants killed in 2013 stood at 100 as against 84 for 2012, an increase of 19,04%, concludes SATP. (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2014)

Once we have outlined the major security dynamics we need to investigate if there is any correlation between counterinsurgency and economic interest.

Before any other consideration it is worth mentioning that the political economy of postcolonial South Asia clustered under the sign of state-led growth and quasi-socialism. Free market and private initiative were seen as moral wrongs and inefficient technical devices to alleviate poverty (Cohen, 2001, 98-103; Taroor, 2008, 185-188 ). Protectionism became the name of the day and remained so until today, in spite of Sri Lanka's neoliberal turn after 1977 and the Indian New Economy adopted after 1991. (The Economist, April 15th, 2012)

According to the 2014 Index of Economic Freedom compiled by the Heritage Foundation Sri Lanka ranks 90 (moderately free), India 120, Pakistan 126, Bangladesh 131, Maldives 145 and Nepal 149 (mostly unfree)<sup>16</sup>

Trade barriers prevented the establishment of a common market as one can see below:

**Table 6**

**Proportion of Trade in the GDP of South Asian Countries (by country):**

Year	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
1985-87	24.26	61.25	14.08	60.26	31.91	34.01	61.87
1990-92	19.83	75.05	18.78	88.51	36.28	37.45	68.42
1996-98	30.47	76.15	25.45	167.08	59.59	36.40	79.17
2000-2001	35.50	89.47	29.79	168.94	55.06	35.84	85.42

**Source:** South Asia Development and Cooperation Report, 2004 (Jain, Singh, Winter 2009).

**Table 7**

**Proportion of Intra-SAARC trade out of South Asian overall trade:**

Year	Intra SAARC (millions \$)	Global commerce (millions\$)	%
1980	1210,0	37885,3	3,2
1985	1088,7	43.759,5	2,4
1990	1584,7	65.490,0	2,4
1994	2919,0	83.110,0	3,5

Source: Dash, 1996: 202

<sup>16</sup> (Heritage Foundation, 2014 Index of Economic Freedom, <http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking-> accessed 18 March, 2013).

**Table 8**

Intra-regional Trade Share of South Asia's Total Trade						
(Per cent)						
Country	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004	2007
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Afghanistan <sup>17</sup>	11,4	14,5	11,1	29,7	35,3	43,1
Bangladesh	4,7	6,0	12,8	7,9	10,5	9,4
Bhutan	...	...	...	...	...	...
India	1,7	1,6	2,7	2,5	3,0	2,7
Maldives	12,5	12,7	14,3	22,2	19,8	12,2
Nepal	34,3	11,9	14,8	22,3	47,2	60,5
Pakistan	3,1	2,7	2,3	3,6	5,0	6,6

Source: (Jain, Singh, Winter 2009)

**Table 9****India's Intra-regional Outward FDI, 1996-2007**

Total			South Asia	Host country composition (%)				
US\$ Mn	US\$ Mn	%		Bhutan	Bangladesh	Maldives	Nepal	Sri Lanka
1996-02	6354	165	2.6	0	9.1	12.8	40.7	37.4
2002-03	1334	16	1.2	0	7.4	0	35.6	57.0
2003-04	1191	54	4.5	0	7.6	0	9.9	82.6
2004-05	2263	16	0.7	0	11.1	0	24.9	64.1
2005-06	2136	21	1.0	0	5.9	5.4	3.9	84.9
2006-07	5371	5	0.1	0.9	11.1	0.9	2.1	85.0
Total	18654	280	1.5	1.8	8.4	7.9	29.5	51.4

Source: (Athukorala, 2013: 50)

<sup>17</sup> Afghanistan became the eighth member of SAARC in April 2007 after Kabul made a request in this regard since 1988. JOINT DECLARATION ON THE ADMISSION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN INTO THE SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC) NEW DELHI, 3 APRIL 2007 (O'Rourke, March 4, 2007; Sarkar, 16 May, 2007)

However our study does not concern itself with Afghanistan's place within SAARC or Indian diplomacy towards Kabul.

What is more striking/puzzling is not necessary the slow pace of trade liberalisation, but the fact that India's trade preferences are oriented towards other geographical regions:

**Table 10**

**India's main trade partners, 1998-2012**

Year	Rank	Country	Export (in USD million)	Import (in USD million)	Total Trade (in USD million)	Trade Balance (in USD million)
2011-2012	1	CHINA P RP	18.077	57.518	75.594	-39.441
2010-2011	1	U ARAB EMTS	33.822	32.753	66.576	1.069
2009-2010	1	U ARAB EMTS	23.970	19.499	43.470	4.471
2008-2009	1	U ARAB EMTS	24.477	23.791	48.269	686
2007-2008	1	U S A	20.731	21.067	41.799	-336
2006-2007	1	U S A	18.863	11.738	30.602	7.125
2005-2006	1	U S A	17.353	9.455	26.808	7.898
2004-2005	2	U S A	13.766	7.001	20.767	6.764
2003-2004	2	U S A	11.490	5.035	16.525	6.455
2002-2003	2	U S A	10.896	4.444	15.339	6.452
2001-2002	2	U S A	8.513	3.150	11.663	5.364
2000-2001	2	U S A	9.305	3.015	12.320	6.290
1999-2000	1	U S A	8.396	3.560	11.956	4.835
1998-1999	1	U S A	7.200	3.640	10.840	3.559
1997-1998	1	U S A	6.735	3.714	10.450	3.021

**Source:** Department of Commerce, Export Import Data Bank,  
<http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/iecnttopnq.asp>

The same is for the aid India gives to other countries: it does not show a SAARC-centered concern, although some of the top aid targets are South Asian countries.

**Table 10**

**Principal destination of India's aid and loan programmes (excluding lines of credit),  
current USD in millions**

Country/region	Sum
Bhutan	366,43
Afghanistan	52,35
Maldives	49,28
Nepal	27,08
African countries	22,38
Sri Lanka	24,01
Myanmar	20,18
Eurasian countries	5,42
Bangladesh	1,44
Latin American countries	0,36
Mongolia	0,09
Others	48,84
Total	617,85

**Source:** Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Annual Reports 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12 in Trade-Related South-South Cooperation: India, OECD study, COM/DCD/TAD(2012) 9, p.6

The failure of the region to establish direct flights from one capital no another speaks volumes about the lack of trust/interest as precondition for further development of infrastructure. (Ahmed, Bathanagar, 2008, 11)

However, trade numbers do not give the whole story of economic interdependence. For better or for worse Indian capital and investment is present in several of SAARC's countries. For Nepal and Bhutan, landlocked economies without maritime access, foreign enterprises are crucial to their development. At present India provides Nepal with 360 billion rupees worth of assistance and conducts 370 different projects valued at 4 billion rupees. (Sharma, Jul 9, 2013)

Criticism does lack as some authors outline that New Delhi's economic involvement is not about altruism but more of a tool to deepen exploitation. (Taneja and Subhanil Chowdhury, February 13, 2010)

Even more than with Kathmandu, Indian-Bhutanese interactions are not described by exchange of goods but by hydrological projects. (Embassy of India, August 28, 2013; The Economic Times, 2 September 2013)

### Discussion

South Asian politics is destined to orbit around India's actions and the subsequent responses to those very actions. It remains to be seen, however, what kind and to what extent one can speak about Indian regional hegemony. Simplifying Miriam Prys' schemata we can assert that regional hegemony goes from predominance via the will to act towards the acceptance of the others. Each term deserves a closer scrutiny in its own right.

① The list of material capabilities in absolute terms renders New Delhi's predominance against neighbours a seemingly indisputable fact:

**Table 11**

#### South Asia in hard power indicators

Country/ Dimension <sup>18</sup>	Area (in square kilometres )	Population	Life expectanc y	GDP (in bld. dollar s)	Number of soldiers	Defence budget aut of total GDP	Corruption index (2012) <sup>19</sup>
Banglades h	143.998	163.654.860	70,36	122,7	157.000- 210.000 <sup>20</sup> /36.520,	1,4%	144

<sup>18</sup> With the exception of military figures and those regarding corruption everything else is taken from CIA Factbook, [www.ciafactbook.com](http://www.ciafactbook.com)

<sup>19</sup> Index of Corruption Perception, Transparency International:  
<http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/> (last accessed 15 September, 2013)

<sup>20</sup> Military Balance 2011 gives 157.000 Trading Economics ( 2010) provides 210.000. (Cordesman, Hammond, Gagel, 2011, 93-94)

See also Trading Economics: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/armed-forces-personnel-total-wb-data.html> (last accessed 29 July, 2013)

					491		
Bhutan	38.394	725.296	68,44	2,196	8000 <sup>21</sup> /2 02.407	1%	33
India	3,287,26 3	1.220.800.3 59	67,48	1,825	1.325.00 0 <sup>22</sup> /319.1 29.420	1,8%	94
Maldives	298	393.988	74,92	2,209	156.319	5%	-
Nepal	147.181	30,430,267	66,86	19,42	105.500 <sup>23</sup> /6.941. 152	1,3%	139
Pakistan	796.095	193.238.868	66,71	231,9	617.000 <sup>24</sup> /48.453 .305	3,1%	139
Sri Lanka	65.610	21.675.648	76,15	59,41	213.000 <sup>25</sup> / 5.342.14 7	2,9%	79

Nonetheless when taking into consideration societal variables such as literacy, child mortality and so on, a bleaker picture of Indian predominance is revealed:

**Table 12**

**South Asia in human development indicators**

	Years	India	Bangladesh	Bhutan	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	China
<b>GNI per capita \$</b>	1990	877	543	1.280	53	1.210	1.420	813
	2010	3560	1.800	4.950	1.200	1.780	4.980	7.570
<b>Life expectancy in years</b>	1990	58	54	52	54	61	69	68
	2010	64	67	67	67	67	74	75

<sup>21</sup> (Times of India, Jun 24, 2007)

<sup>22</sup> The Economist quotes from Military Balance 2013, IISS- International Institute for Strategic Studies. (The Economist: Mar 30th 2013). A slight increase from 2011 when Military Balance gave 1305,45 thousand soldiers. (Cordesman, Hammond, Gagel, 2011, 93-94)

<sup>23</sup> Along with active military men one should consider another 40.000 reserve. (Global Firepower, 15 October, 2012)

<sup>24</sup> For 2011 Military Balance gives 617.000 (out of each: 550.000 army; 22.000 navy and 45.000 air force). Global Firepower gives 617.000 active soldiers and 550.000 reserves. (Global Firepower, 12 April, 2012)

<sup>25</sup> The approximate number of 210.000 is taken from Trading Economics: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/sri-lanka/armed-forces-personnel-total-wb-data.html> (accessed 15 July 2013)

Global Security mentions only army and navy personnel in 2010 (aprox): 162.000 soldiers along with 48.000 marines (level 2009). Air force strength is not provided. This sector had the fastest growth, from 40.000 strong in 1987 towards 50.000 in early 1990 to pass by 11.000 after 2000. Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/sri-lanka/army-troops.htm>

Military Balance (2011) mentions 162.000 land troops, 117,9 thousands marines supplemented by a reserve of 1000. (Cordesman, Hammond, Gagel, 2011, 93-94)

<b>Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births</b>	1990	81	99	96	97	96	26	38
	2010	48	38	44	41	70	14	16
<b>Under 5 mortality rate</b>	1990	115	143	139	141	124	32	48
	2010	63	48	56	50	87	17	18
<b>Proportion of underweight children (%)</b>	1990	59,5	61,5	34	-	39	29	13
	2007	43,5	41,3	12	38,8	-	21,6	4,5
<b>Access to improved sanitation</b>	1990	18	39	-	11	28	70	41
	2008	31	53	65	31	45	91	50
<b>Mean years of schooling</b>	1990	3,0	2,9	-	2,0	2,3	6,9	4,9
	2010	4,4	4,8	-	3,2	4,9	8,2	7,6
<b>Female literacy rate (%)</b>	1991	49	38	-	33	-	93	91
	2009	74	77	68	77	61	99	99

**Source:** (Sen, Dreze, March 14, 2011)

Whereas in 1990 India ranked second best in social indicators among South Asia's peers, twenty years later it has "become *second worst and this is so despite the fact that India has grown immensely faster than all other economies in South Asia in terms of GNP or Gross Domestic Product (GDP)*" says Amartya Sen, world renowned economist. (Economic Times, 7 January 2012; Prasannarajan, 5 July 2013)

Those factors, along with many others (such as suicide among security personnel, presented above) are crucial for translating potential power into manifest action. The industrial pool base or the number of tanks are of little meaning on the long term if human capital lags behind. To use a metaphor, it does not really matter if the teeth are sharp but the gums are ill and shaky.

② Crucial for both political scientists and practitioners, the notion of power displays elusive features and invites numerous fallacies. Amongst them are that a) power is associated with coercion and violence; b) national power stems from material, quantitative capabilities and c) can be deduced from results ("if A defeated B than A is stronger than B"). (Nye, 2012, 24; Guzzini, 2013, 3 and passim)

On the international stage power relationships between actors have many forms, some very subtle, not to mention that power asymmetry can very well coexist with cooperation. Thus one should not restrain its use to brutality- it can very well be exercised by restricting one's options or by controlling the environment of other actors.<sup>26</sup>

As historical experience shows, India's tools used to meddle over regional borders went from outright brutal military intervention (East Pakistan 1971; Sri

<sup>26</sup> First was put forward by Bachrach and Baratz and the second by Lukes (quoted in Nye, 2012: 111)

Lanka 1987-1990; Maldives 1988); shenanigans of helping different radical outfits (Tamil Tigers in early 1980s; Nepali Maoists 1996-2001) to softer tools like joint ventures and outflows of financial aid.

After 2001 military means have been channeled towards assisting counterinsurgency operations within domestic borders and less towards vicinity. Indian governments tossed away the leverage of armed exports with regard to Nepal and Sri Lanka. Displeased as they were with American meddling in their traditional backyard, both Vajpaae and more so, Manmohan Singh shouldered the efforts of the international community to bring the crisis to a halt. In the Srilankan case, Singh's ruling coalition took the risk to lose the support of Tamil parties unhappy with New Delhi's handling of Rajapaksa's growing iron grip over the island, or even the foreign investments over there. (Sitaraman, 25 March, 2014)<sup>27</sup>

As to Bangladesh, this is a big country, part of the Islamic belt and will not be pushed aside easily. It is true that New Delhi seldom harked at Dhaka's support for hostile organizations, but Bangladeshi based terrorism was and continues to be a reality, so it cannot be dismissed as a pretext for economic expansion. (Mazumdar, Nov 29, 2002; Sharma, 13 February, 2012; The Times of India, Feb 24, 2012) In this case, if one is to talk about Indian hegemony, than power must be defined more as an agenda setting instrument ( in the acception of Bachrach and Baratz & Lukes. See Nye, 2012, 111) than brute force. Secular forces from Bangladesh fear terrorist menace as well as interior minister, Shahara Khatun acknowledged in front of an Indian official that: "*Bangladesh will not tolerate any anti-India activity on its soil. We have not allowed in the past, nor we will do in the future. Both countries are victims of terrorism. So, there is no question of harbouring any one.*" (The Times of India, Feb 24, 2012)

Overall Indian investment outflow in South Asia does not sustain <war on terrorism qua imperialism> thesis. Athukorala shows that "regional share of Indian outward investment has declined continuously, from 4.5% in 2003-04 to a mere 0.1% in 2006-07." (Athukorala, 2013, 23)

In what concerns the premises of this study, it is shaky to infer that India used terrorist threat as the instrument of choice for exploitation or open new markets. Intra-SAARC trade is still marginal for economic interaction. Even if bilateral trade has grown in different bilateral settings (with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), India's neighbours are still poor and raise trade barriers fearing gross imbalances in the eventuality of their opening to Indian market. ( De Biswa, Bhattacharyay, 2007, 9)

With this aspect we reach point ③ and take notice that South Asian states disregard their Lilliputian scale and pursue national interests. If one is to find economic incentives in India's behavior used as leverage to gain political stake Bhutan and Sri Lanka come closest to validate the premise.

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<sup>27</sup> In 2010-2011 India was the second investor in Sri Lanka after Hong Kong (Athukorala, 2013, 18)

## CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PIVOTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This article harboured the metapremise that warfare and society impact each other and that nationbuilding is not a once-and-for-all-given status but rather a recurrent response to external pressure. Further on, it problematised the extent to which hegemonic stability theory can be used to explain regional dynamics in the context of the struggle against terrorism. The Indian neighbourhood policy provided the case study to see whether the alliance with post 9/11 America was exploited to enhance power over both domestic security problems as well as over the other subcontinental states.

The conclusion seems to be that although Indian behaviour in its proximity may be envisaged as a continuum between nationbuilding and regional hegemony, the exhibits presented here do not lead to a clear-cut profile for India's regional profile. At the same time the findings of these article go beyond Miriam Prys' analysis and somehow against her assertion that India should be viewed as a disengaged regional power:

*"India's foreign policy thus experienced a shift in priorities from the regional to the global level, which is crucial for explaining its South Asian policies. This approach could be described as 'cautious pragmatism', which involves that India's attitude toward the region is characterized by a lack of dedication rather than by a yet to be defined hegemonic leadership ambitions."*

*"A key to these findings is that India appears to lack the interest to deal with region or to even generate the followership that is so frequently assumed to be an essential part of regional powerhood."* (Prys, 2013, 291-292)

Finding a pattern to explain India behavior towards its geographical proximity seems to be one of the most theory resisting cases. First there is disagreement as to whether one should be talking about hegemony at all. Whereas for important parts of Pakistan or Nepali public opinion, (at least how they are expressed in media or blogs) Indian *malignant hegemony* cannot be denied (Baral in Ahmar, 2001, 192; Budania, 2001, 261; Raman, 18 October 2002; Cheema, June 12, 2007; The Tribune Express, November 18, 2011; Telegraph Nepal, 15.02.2011; Pakistan Today, 15 November, 2011; Prasai, Dutta, 5 May, 2012; Khan, June 01, 2012; Ghani, Chandio, 2013, 112-120), many Indians do not see their country as such and prefer the selfnarrative of a caring big brother. Secondly many IR students claim such hegemony either does not exist either is incoherent.<sup>28</sup>

Before we go further we have to remember that South Asia's configuration of power is mostly the result of the Partition (or partitions, if one considers the 1971 war as the aftermath of 1947). As in many other postimperial set-ups, bonds between former limbs of the same body remain and interaction cannot always be confined to juridical borders (Bernard, Pochoy, 1988, 9-13; Malone, 2011, 49).

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<sup>28</sup> The author recollects the answers received to this article's research question. While Stephen P. Cohen, an American, acknowledged a certain hegemonic behaviour towards the rest of South Asia, Sumit Ganguly dismissed the hypothesis as nothing more than *Pakistani propaganda*.

Many social and economic problems are both domestic and external in their character (Kumar, 2004, 178-179). In India's case chronic insurgent movements, porous borders, transnational crime or drug traffic made necessary to look for solutions in a regional manner. Conflict with Pakistan has only rendered more acute this intermestic features and made security a function/consequence of nationbuilding.<sup>29</sup> Just like the US-Soviet confrontation meant not only display of hard power or proliferation of allies but also strengthening your society to withstand the effort, South Asian units had to tackle the roots of their distress at the junction between security and development.<sup>30,31</sup> a strategic landscape by no means exceptional for multiple Third world postcolonial nations. Aforesaid, Western IR theories encounter difficulties when it comes to explaining phenomena that do not fit neatly in the state vs society dichotomy. To overcome this predicament we advance a pattern for Indian regional behaviour more indebted to political science than to international relations and we assert that India's world view remains quasiWestphalian.- Expressed in historical terms, its diplomacy is both premodern and postmodern in engaging boundaries: not as sacrosanct norms but more as fluid limits to be dealt on ad-hoc basis.

The historical experience of South Asia shows that kingdoms and empires come and go and that their rule is rarely absolute but often negotiated with subject/client communities (Malone, 2011, 20-24). When the British Raj fell apart, the political elites from New Delhi did not feel they had to disengage with their neighbourhood.<sup>32</sup> India's federalism somehow translated itself onto the external arena where smaller South Asian sister nations were considered prolongations of the great Republic (Malone, 2011, 103). Nehru's double standard is illustrated from two texts associated with his policies:

a) one is *Panchasheela* (community), a term derived from Buddhist scriptures that would frame Indo-Chinese relations and which was based on five principles: (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal

<sup>29</sup> We may assess also China's involvement as sponsor for Naxalite movements during late sixties and early seventies. However Chinese factor remains outside the scope of this research. (Chellaney, 2001/02, 106)

<sup>30</sup> For a paradigmatic link between economic performance and security for India's elites see Manmohan Singh's 15 August 2012 speech: " *If we do not increase the pace of the country's economic growth...it most certainly affects our national security.*" (Daniel, August 15, 2012)

<sup>31</sup> There is an already known link between waging war and building/developing institutions in modern experience as Charles Tilly voluminous work never tired to repeat. On the same path David K. Levine, Salvatore Modica examine states interaction in the context of violence in long durée (Levine, Modica, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Some azimuths of post 1947 Indian foreign policy continued the British tradition: " *The Indian nationalists, ..developed an ambivalent relationship with this sort of foreign policy projection. On the one hand, there was rejection at one level of the colonial state's power projection as an 'imperialist scheme' which must be rejected after independence... On the other hand, the assertion that India would continue to play a leading role in Asian affairs, if not in the world, not as a military power, but as a benevolent leader, continued to be expressed in nationalist thinking on foreign affairs.*" (Chakrabarti, 2012, 412)

affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence. Beyond this goal, Panchasheela underlined Nehruvian anti-colonialist philosophy on world stage. (Mitra and Schöttli, 2007, 20; see Taroor, 2008, 191);

b) the other is a statement made in 1950: “*Nepal is geographically almost a part of India, although it is an independent country.*” (Bhattarai, 2005, 8)

What can be spelled out of this double standard is a policy which aims predominance in order to assure/model a friendly and loyal neighbourhood. As long as close countries cooperate, New Delhi is eager to play by the book and respect their sovereignty. If confronted with transborder threats or unyielding neighbours, then it might exact pressure in different ways. Inconsistent as it is, the Indian neighbourhood policy follows security over power maximization.

Sometimes a consensus builder, otherwise rude and even bully, India's regional predominance does not quite follow US experience in Central America and only partially those integrative policies garnered by Washington for postWWII Europe. In this second case we can quibble a little more and add that whereas American financial burden post1945 concerned countries endowed with previous developed industrial base (UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy etc), South Asia's smaller nations are still very poor and rise protectionist barrier against Indian commerce (Like Bangladesh bent on preserving its tradition textile manufactures). Of course, one can argue that the future is open and SAARC has already stepped up on the road towards market liberalisation, so the dream of an ASEAN like co-prosperity sphere should not be tossed away, after all.

On the other hand and less visible is the validity of Gilpin's corollary about the diffusion of capabilities- as we could see, both Tamil Tigers as well as Nepalese Maoists were initially fortified by Indian support and logistics (thus capabilities!) only go berserk and oblige New Delhi to try to tackle them, just like post 9/11 United States had to fight back Al Quaida, an organisation largely fueled by Americans in 19802 in order to fight USSR.

Contra Prys, the conclusion of present study, albeit recognizing the astuteness of her argument ,considers that she does not count numerous examples as some of those presented here, arguments which run against the epitome <disengaged hegemon> when dealing with Indian Southasian policy.

As for academic stakes, hegemonic stability paradigm (TSH) can be overall illuminating within the context of regional turn from at least two angles: **I.** inspired by Western history and America's rise to worldly power, TSH shows its limits when put to test in local subsystems. **II.** steamed to its full potential, Gilpinian structuralism has a saying in those places where states, and societies are not confined by fixed borders.

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