



Indian Hegemonic Attitude towards Neighbor States: The Growing Influence of China in South Asia

Muhammad Ahtasham Jan Butt¹, Arfan Latif², Shoukat Ali³

Abstract

India is the largest and the most powerful state of South Asia. She possesses the biggest economy, military, population and the landmass which makes her an inimitable state in this region. Being the most powerful state of South Asia, it was her responsibility to walk with the rest of the minor states of SAARC but she adopted the opposite way. In the contemporary era, India has been involving in the territorial, water and border disputes with her neighbor states. Almost all of the other states of South Asia share border with India and confront any of the above mentioned issues or more. These minor states want to resolve their issues with India through diplomatic and peaceful means but unfortunately, the Indian hegemonic attitude is the biggest hurdle in this way. Being the largest state of the region India does not pay much attention to these issues. This indifferent and hegemonic attitude of India pushed the minor states of South Asia towards China. In the recent era, the influence of China is increasing at fast speed as she is offering more economic and developmental opportunities to these states. The most important point is that China is treating them on equal basis which is clearly decreasing the role of India in this region. This article is an attempt to disclose the Indian hegemonic role and the growing influence of China in South Asia. This article is based on the secondary analysis in which the data is obtained from different source i.e. books, articles, research reports and newspaper etc.

Keywords: Indian Hegemony, China, Pakistan, border disputes, water disputes

1. Introduction

National interest plays an important role in the contemporary international affairs. The interactions with the other states are basically based on national interests of the states who interact. The national interests are dynamic in nature which changes with the passage of time because the motives and objectives of the states also change over time. There are two types of power i.e. soft and hard power which these states adopt to meet their national interests. It depends on the nature of the power of the country which pursues her national interests either to adopt soft way or hard (Dar, 2017).

If you throw a glance in the history of the world, you will find that the whole world was divided into the major power blocs like Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire and Persian Empire etc. Most of them used the coercive and hard way of power to gain more and more localities because it was the practice of that day but with the advancement of modern concepts of nation, nation-state and democracy etc, the democratic terms were introduced. The civilians were granted more and more civil rights whose protection was the duty of democratic governments. The political situation witnessed marvelous changes because there came some radical changes in the political system. Now the hard power was mostly replaced with the soft power. Now the rule of jungle was replaced with enacted democratic laws and no big power can coercively snatch or occupy the territories of the others.

Despite the advancement of democracy and international organizations, still the hard power is being used by some big powers. The democracy is the system of mere some definitions for such coercive powers because they do not bother about the civil and human rights of the people. They just want to annex more territories and powers to show off their supremacy in their regions. In the modern political system, there is only one big power which has adopted the policy of soft power and that is China. China is considered the second largest economy of the world after US and possesses the largest military. Despite having largest military and nuclear power, China is purely following the soft way of power. She is investing in the fields of human and social development across the globe especially in the South Asian region. On the other hand, India is far behind in the field of economy and power adopted is coercive and hegemonic with its neighbors and with her minorities.

2. India---A Giant South Asian State

Geopolitics is another important factor which determines the worth of a state in the international scenario. It is the geopolitics which attracts the attention of the big powers. In the same way, India is having important geopolitical situation in South Asia. India is being the biggest South Asian state shares borders with almost all of the South Asian states. The history can be modified and changed but the geography of a state cannot be changed. It can only be changed in the result of a radical change which may result due to a war or a sudden natural change. Hence, due to its geostrategic position, India has a key position in this region. On the other hand, due to the smaller economies and powers of South Asian states, India is adopting a rigid and hegemonic attitude with them except Pakistan who has capability to stand before the illegal hegemony of India (Tharoor, 2012).

India is the giant country of South Asia. She shares borders with all member states of this region i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan. Afghanistan is also member of SAARC which was included into this organization later but she is basically a Central Asian State. India occupies almost 72% land

¹ Assistant Professor of History, Higher Education Department, Punjab Pakistan

² Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Okara, Pakistan

³ Parole officer, Government of Punjab, Pakistan

surface of South Asia, 77% population of the region, and possesses almost 75% regional economy. Furthermore having the nuclear capability and largest military force of South Asia, India has adopted very hegemonic attitude with the rest of South Asian states. The regional organization SAARC was established in 1985 with the initiative of the then military dictator of Bangladesh Zia-ur-Rehman with the help of smaller states basically. The hegemonic attitude of India has halted the functioning of this regional organization (Kadrigamar, 2013).

At the same time, India shares her territorial borders with Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and China in the north-western side. The north-western side is more critical for India as compared to the south-eastern side. In the north-west side, India has escalated relations with China and Pakistan as well. Although China and India have worthy bilateral trade yet they are confronted in the Tibet side. On the other hand, in the western side, the relations with Pakistan are also tussled due to the Kashmir issue. These three states i.e. India, Pakistan and China are among the a few nuclear weapon states of the world. The current disturbed situation may lead to a war which may be nuclear war that is why South Asia has become a critical region of the world (Pant, 2016).

China and Pakistan are both good friends and share a mountainous border in Gilgit-Baltistan side. Their friendship is well known in the contemporary international scenario. To cope this bilateral closeness, US and Israel have prepared India in South Asia. Along with the US and Israel support, the other western and European countries are also favoring India in this regard. The basic reason behind this whole game is to tackle the Chinese enlarging foreign policies especially in South Asia. The support of big powers has boosted up the passion of India to control the smaller states of South Asia i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Maldives etc.

Being the biggest state of South Asia, India should adopt a friendly and cooperative attitude with the rest of the member states. But unfortunately, the way India has opted with the smaller states of this region is not encouraging because the states like Nepal and Bhutan are oppressed by her economic and territorial policies. They have to obey India due to their limited economic opportunities in their countries. In the recent era, the circumstances show that due to hegemonic behavior of India the situation is being changed in the region. India has not balanced relations with her neighbor countries because she wants to enforce her own policies on the others. Pakistan is the only country which resists the indifferent policies of India and stands before the illegal territorial occupation in Kashmir. Pakistan also supports the legal stance of the smaller member states against the oppression of India.

3. Indo-Bangladesh Relations

After partition of British India, Bangladesh became the part of Pakistan with the name of "East Pakistan". Pakistan was divided into two parts i.e. East and West Pakistan. There was hundreds of miles territorial distance between these two parts and their capital was in West Pakistan. Soon, the differences arose between them. The Bengalis dominated East Pakistan was not happy with the decisions of the West Pakistan. The situation continued to escalate over time that they could survive for almost 24 years together. In 1971, the East Pakistan got separated from the West Pakistan in the result of a civil war and there was born a new country on the global map in the name of Bangladesh.

India was against the partition of British India and continued to put hurdles for new born Pakistan. The separation of the East Pakistan did not take place at once rather there were long term Indian policies behind this whole game. The Indian governments were in the chase of chance to destabilize Pakistan since its inception. The Hindu teachers in the East Pakistan played a key role in the separation. They motivated the Bengalis for uprising and supported their cause of separation from the dominant West Pakistan. The issue the Urdu and Bengali language further deteriorated the situation that at last in December 1971, Bangladesh came into being.

The Indian role in the establishment of Bangladesh cannot be neglected. Indian government was the basic factor behind the separation movement of Mujib-ur-Rehman. Since the inception, Bangladesh was tied in the diplomatic relations with India and both of them shared strong relations during Mujib's era. Mujib-ur-Rehman got the massive fame in Bangladesh and he had healthy ties with India. But the situation changed over time due to assassination of Mujib and military takeover in Bangladesh. The military dictator also recognized the help of India for separation but the relations were not same like the earlier (Paranjpe & Thomas, 1991). Indian governments wanted to maintain their dominance over the Bangladeshi government after Mujib's assassination. But the new Bengali governments did not give much importance to India. They wished to maintain their sovereign identity to work independently. Both of the countries are tied with diplomatic relations despite having water and territorial disputes (Paranjpe & Thomas, 1991).

4. Border Disputes

The territorial issue is one of the major issues between India and Bangladesh. Due to the involvement of Indian government in the formation of Bangladesh, both of the countries came close to each other and shared healthy bilateral relations in the initial years. The then rulers of both states Indra Gandhi and Sheikh Mujib ur Rehman initiated Indra-Mujib Land Border Agreement in 1974 that has not been ratified by Indian government to date. Finally, the Indian Parliament has passed this bilateral land agreement on May 7, 2015 but still needs the ratification by Indian side. It shows that India is not willing to grant territorial right to Bangladesh for her own territory. Furthermore, India is planning a transit route in the north-eastern states which Bangladesh considers as a threat for her security (Feroz Khan).

The issue of Bengali migrants is also a key concern between India and Bangladesh. India blames that Bengalis migrate to the Indian territories illegally. But the reality is that poor economical resources in the neighbors of India force their inhabitants to migrate to India in search of employment and sometimes they become the victim of security forces (Khatri, 1998). The killing of the Bengali migrants in the border side is the routine matter of the Indian security forces which is the worst form bilateral relationship of both countries. The “Shoot to Kill” is the basic policy that security forces follow on the Indian borders. In this regard, the Human Rights Watch reported that nearly 1500 Bengali people have been killed by the Indian security forces during the period of 2001-2017 (Human Rights Report Watch-2017).

5. Water Disputes

In the recent era, the more and more measures are undertaken to control the water resources. The disputes of the 20th century were related with the oil resources but the issues of this century are more likely to be linked with the management of water resources. The per capita water is decreasing in Bangladesh and even in India due to the massive population and mismanagement of the water resources. The South Asian states basically depend on the agricultural resources. The same case is with Bangladesh whose agriculture and other major sectors depend on the availability of the water resources in which she is dependent on India. India is exploiting Bangladesh in the distribution of water resources (Peterson & Posner, 2010).

Being the smaller South Asian state, Bangladesh is surrounded by India on almost three sides. Despite the cordial relations in the early years, both states messed up with some territorial and environmental problems. The water sharing problem is also one of the key concerns between these two states (Quassem, 2010). The water issue ranges with India over Ganges and Teesta. There are almost 50 rivers which Bangladesh shares with India. Bangladesh is the lower riparian that is why she is dependent on India for her water share. India is continuing to build dams on the rivers that are the basic source of water for irrigation and other purposes in Bangladesh. The diversion of water is being made independently by India without the consent of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has raised objections about the construction of dams on the rivers like Teesta, Gumti, Khowi, Dharla, Monu and Dudkumar etc. On the other hand, there are also some rivers which have been blocked by India like Muhri, Fulchari, Chagalnaiya and Kachu etc (Islam, 2011).

Like the border management commission, Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC) was also developed in 1972. The basic objective of this commission was to make easy functioning and division of water resources between both countries. Unfortunately, like the border management commission, the river commission also went in vain due to the reluctant attitude of Indian government. The construction Farakka Barrage in 1975 is also not justified according to this river commission because the diversion of water was made on contrary to the wishes of Bangladesh (Rashid, 2010). The water of Bangladesh with India is as old as Bangladesh herself is. Due to the minor state and lower riparian, it is the fate of Bangladesh to depend on the water resources maintained by India (Rahman, 2010). Bangladesh cannot fight with the huge country of South Asia i.e. India. Bangladesh has to maintain good relations and to solve her disputes in diplomatic way (Islam, 2011). Article 9 of the Ganges River Treaty 1996 clearly elaborates that India is obliged to abide by the agreements of water sharing without any exploitation and discrimination. But the real picture is totally opposite to the treaty in which India is not following the real clauses of the treaty rather she is abusing the rights of Bangladesh. India is diverting the fluency of water share of Bangladesh for her own purposes which show the violation of Ganges Water Treaty (Islam, 2011).

The whole above discussion explains that despite the cordial relations of India with Bangladesh in the early years, the disputes continued to rise between them. The circumstance changed with the passage of time due to the hegemony of India. India considers that she is superior to the other South Asian countries and the same case is with Bangladesh. Now India and Bangladesh are confronted with many bilateral issues among them water and borders disputes have key position. This is basically India who is violating the legal rights of Bangladesh which needs the attention of international organizations.

6. Indo-Nepal Bilateral Ties

Nepal is another South Asian state which shares her most of the border length with India. Basically Nepal is sandwiched between China and India while she is encircled by Indian territories from three sides. Both India and China are the major states which forces Nepal to deal them on equal diplomatic ties. But due to the three side of Indian circle, Nepal had been more tilted towards India than China (Dahal, 2018). The bilateral relationship of Nepal with China and India exists since her inception. She has developed diplomatic relations with since 13th June, 1947 with India and with China since August, 1955.

There are many factors which play important role in the establishment of bilateral relationships with the other countries. For example, the geographical location, the geography and population, the natural resources, physical and environmental features etc. The important geographic location is the key factor in the development of relations with other countries (Bhattarai, 2005).

The geographic location of Nepal compels her to maintain relations with both China and India. Nepal's foreign policy is also shaped according to both of these states but due to close mass interaction with India, Nepal is tilted towards India since her inception. Nepal wishes to establish goodwill ties with all neighbors (Jaishankar, 2016).

But with the advancement of democracy in Nepal, the situation is changing. India has adopted an uninterested attitude towards Nepal while China is establishing the bilateral ties on equal basis. This is the reason the new generation is raising a voice against the dominant Indian policies (Savada, 1991).

The development of Nepal-India bilateral ties is based on India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship. This treaty provided that the bilateral ties between these states will be based on equal basis but contrary to that India adopted a dominated policy towards Nepal. India plays a role like a pressure group in the political and internal matters of Nepal. There are two contrasting ways of relationship between India and Nepal. At the government level, the way of India is aggressive and volatile. On the other hand, the relationship between the people of both states is warming. Furthermore, the border disputes by the Indian side are also worsening the situation (Dahal, 2018).

7. Border Dispute

The border between India and Nepal is open and the citizens of countries visit each other's country without much restricted situation. The open border has both positive and negative attributes. The free movement is helpful for the employment purpose especially the Nepalese because they have limited employment opportunities in their country. But on the other side, the smugglers, human traffickers and other criminal people also get advantage on the both sides from this free movement. This is another debate that only Nepalese are blamed for such criminal activities.

The practice of open border management can be traced back to the treaty of Peace and Friendship which was signed in 1950. This treaty granted the equal right to the citizens of both countries for residence, acquisition of property, employment and the free movement from one country to another. But with time, the situation continued to change and today both of the states are facing border management disputes (Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950). Nepal is a landlocked country and through the Indian Territory she has the smallest route to sea. This is also the reason the Indian dominance over Nepal. India is the largest trading partner of Nepal as her about her 64% foreign trade is associated with India. The rest of the Nepali foreign trade also comes from the Indian routes. Nepal shares 15 Indian transit routes and 22 trading points for international and bilateral trade. This is the weak point of Nepal which pushes her to follow the Indian hegemonic policies at any cost otherwise she will have to face bitter circumstances (Treaty of Transit, 1991).

Currently there are almost 54 disputed border points between Nepal and India which cover 60,000 hectares along the bilateral border. The prominent disputed border points are Kalapani (37,840 ha), Tanakpur (222 ha), Susta (14860 ha), Mechi (1600 ha) and Pashupatinagar etc. These points are the major bone of contention at border management between Nepal and India (Shrestha, 2006).

While taking advantage of the free border, India also blames Nepal about the international agencies' involvement through Nepal. It is the routine of India to blame Nepal especially with regard of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) through Nepal. Sometimes it is also reported about the visits of Dawood Ibrahim in Kathmandu. Dawood is an Indian origin gangster who has a pressure group in India (India Today, 2000). India could not control his network in his native country and she is blaming Nepal for his visits. This shows the inferiority of Nepal and superiority of Indian government.

As it has been mentioned above that Nepal is sandwiched between China and India but she has border issue with India only. China shares border on the north side of Nepal but due to mountainous region both of them are not confronted with any border mismanagement. On the other side, Nepal shares border with India in 21 of 26 districts. In these 21 districts there are 54 points where is border problem between both states. (Paudyal, 2013).

Nepal-India Joint Technical Committee was formed in 1981 to resolve the bilateral border disputes. This committee was assigned the task of border management but after 26 years it has been dissolved in 2007. India and Nepal share 1808 km long territorial border which confront border issues at different earlier discussed points. The committee had settled almost 98% of the disputes and only 2% was unresolved. The final reports were ready to sign but the dissolution of the committee represents that India is not willing to settle these border issues (Paudyal, 2013). The detail of border disputes is discussed in detail that there are 54 points of border disputes between India and Nepal. But on the other and India says that there are only two points of border disputes between both countries i.e. Susta and Kalapani. It again represents that India does take this border issue seriously perhaps due to her giant size as compared to Nepal (Shrestha, 2006).

8. Indo- Sri Lankan Disputes

The bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka has deep roots prior to the independence of both countries. They had been engaged in social, religious, cultural and ethnic ties. This relationship deteriorated after the civil war in Sri Lanka which is also linked with India. During this war, Indian government adopted two track diplomacy i.e. on one hand Indra's government was involved in these clashes while on the other she also offered the assistance to resolve these clashes (Abraham, 2006). On one side, India offered assistance to overcome this bad situation while on the other side the Indian aircrafts were dropping the foods for the Tamils in Jaffna (a peninsula in Sri Lanka). This exposed the double role of Indian government in Sri Lanka (Dixit, 2006). Later, Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement was signed in 1987 by both governments to settle this bilateral issue. Both governments agreed

to handle the situation diplomatically. The main clause of this agreement was to devolve the Sri Lankan power to nine provincial councils in nine provinces of Sri Lanka (Kodikara, 1987).

After this bilateral agreement, the Indian government promised to send Indian Peacekeeping Troops in Sri Lanka to tackle the Tamil tigers. But the situation changed dramatically because these Tamil militants started a war with these peacekeeping forces. In result, 1500 these peacekeeping soldiers were killed by the Tamil tigers (Thilakarathna, 2006). The Tamil conflict led to more fatal results for Indian government because one of the Tamil militants killed Rajiv Gandhi during his election campaign in Tamil Nadu state. The LTTE was later banned and declared as a terrorist organization. But despite this, LTTE became one of the powerful terrorist organizations in nineties. Later, in the first decade of 21st century, this Tamil problem was controlled and in this regard Pakistan sent her commandos to help Sri Lankan government (De Voorde, 2005).

In the post-war era, both India and Sri Lanka came closer. India provided assistance to Sri Lanka to reestablish the infrastructure and other developments which were destroyed during the war time. In 2010, India granted US\$27.5 million for the developmental process for the northern areas of Sri Lanka which was basically hit by the Tamils. Later, in 2011 India again provided 15% of the foreign finance commitment to Sri Lanka which further helped her to boost up her economy and development (Ministry of Finance and Planning Sri Lanka, 2011).

Soon after the civil war, India and Sri Lanka started to share warm relations but the situation did not remain same due to the imbalances of economy, geography, and military power between them. Sri Lanka is a minor state before India hence the Indian people and government do not treat the Sri Lankans on equal basis. The Tamil Nadu state has adopted special hate and inferiority against them. This state has demanded many times that India should change her foreign policy with regard to Sri Lanka due to their clash. The Chief Minister of Tamil-Nadu and other stakeholders who have soft corner for LTTE i.e. the political parties accuse Sri Lanka about the war crimes during her operation in 2009. This escalated the bilateral situation again between both of the countries (Thalpwala, 2014). Along with the political parties, government of Tamil Nadu, the college and university students also go on strikes against Sri Lanka. They have also the same motto like the political actors about the issue of war crime. These student unions are also triggered by these political parties (The Hindu, 2013). This is again due to the poor and minor size of Sri Lanka because she cannot stand before such a giant state in South Asia.

Furthermore, the dispute of fisheries is another important topic of concern between India and Sri Lanka. Before the Tamil war in Sri Lanka, the Tamils of India used to go in the Sri Lankan areas for fishing but the circumstances changed after this war. Now Sri Lankan navy regularly patrols in her jurisdiction that is not accepted by the Tamil fishermen. During the war times, these areas were under the control of LTTE and Indian Tamils have free movement in these areas but now it is restricted which further escalated the situation between both of them (Sharma, 1999).

Tamil Nadu (an Indian state) and Sri Lanka have also a problem over a tiny island known as “Kachchativu Island”. This is basically a barren island lies between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. This island is about 1.5 sq km which is located in the Palk Strait which lies between India and Sri Lanka. This island was given to Sri Lanka by Indian Government in 1974 under the treaty of “Kachchativu island Pact”. The Tamil Nadu government under Jeyalalitha strongly opposed this decision and started a campaign to get this island back. This government even filed a petition in Supreme Court in Tamil Nadu and demanded that Indian government should take this Island back (Suryanarayan, 2013).

The whole of above discussion illustrates that both India and Sri Lanka are also confronting many issues. The Tamil insurgency, fisheries and Kachchativu Island are the major bones of contention. Despite the warm relations returned after the Tamil war between them but situation could not remain same. Now an Indian State Tamil Nadu has major issues with Sri Lankan government over the above mentioned issues basically. The Indian federal government did not pay much attention to resolve these issues because perhaps she does not consider it important. It again demonstrates the Indian hegemonic and indifferent attitude with the smaller states of South Asia.

9. India- Bhutan Relations

The kingdom of Bhutan is a physically small state of South Asia while possessing tiny economic and military scope. The area of Bhutan is too small as compared to India and Pakistan. Being a small state of this region, Bhutan maintained her peaceful reputation. There are limited chances of threats, terrorism and economic disparity within the state (Karma, 2002). Bhutan plays a role like a buffer state between India and China. She is laid between these two big states and tries to maintain a balanced policy with them. Being sandwiched between India and China, Bhutan’s major policies are often termed within Indian influence (Kohli, 1993). After the partition of British India, “Standstill Agreements” were signed with Tibet, Sikkim and Nepal. The basic motive of these agreements was to maintain the smooth relationships between India and other northern neighbor states. Furthermore, the bilateral relationship between India and Bhutan was made clear in 1949 under Indo-Bhutan treaty (Yadav, 1996).

Like Nepal, Bhutan is also sandwiched between two nuclear powers of Asia; India and China. Being a petite state, Bhutan has to maintain equal diplomatic relations with these two giant states of Asia. In the same way like Nepal, Bhutan has more tilt to India than China due to her physical proximity. The diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were developed in 1968 when an Indian representative was appointed in Thimphu. The basic bilateral

relationship was established in 1949 under the Treaty of Friendship but the developments were made later (<http://www.indianembassythimphu.bt>).

Bhutan as such does not have a prominent border or other disputes because she is too small state. Yet the foreign policy of Bhutan is largely influenced by India due to her physical and historical closeness with India. But now the circumstances are going to change with the huge involvement of China in South Asia. Like the other smaller states of South Asia, Bhutan too does not possess the capacity to stand in front of the Indian policies in Bhutan. The citizens of Bhutan are now started to raise their voices against the hegemonies of India and China both. They perceive that they are divided into two terms of political affiliation with these two big powers who share physical border at the same time with Bhutan. The young and educated generation of Bhutan wants to aloof their country from any kind of political influence of India and China.

10. Indo-Pakistan Confrontation

Pakistan and India are two major states of South Asia. Both of them have nuclear capability which makes South Asia unique because out of total a few nuclear weapon states two are residing in this region (Khalid, 2013). On the other hand, the third nuclear weapon state China also shares borders with both of these states. The rivalry of Pakistan and India is well known in the international political system. The enmity of Pakistan and India is not a recent phenomenon rather its roots are traced back to the pre partition era. The Hindu dominant India did not wish partition but on the other hand, the Muslims of subcontinent strived to get the liberation from the British Imperialism and the brutalities of the Hindus. At the time of partition, there were almost 560 independent states which were ruled under maharajas. Out of these, Kashmir was the largest and most important state which was taken over by Indian government contrary to the wishes of the Kashmiris. The Muslim dominant state was forcefully allied with India which created the most critical problem between both of these states. Both India and Pakistan have fought almost four wars over the issue of Kashmir and still this issue is unresolved. Along with the issue of Kashmir, Pakistan and India are confronted with other issues as well like water issue, dams' construction and other issues.

The historical facts and figures show that there is not any specific time span which illustrates the bilateral clashes rather it has been the routine of them to indulge in different issues. Both of them always have doubts and misconceptions about each other regarding even a minor issue. The confrontation has reached to such level that even a bird is caught and blamed to carry the secret messages. The citizens of both states are put under high level of vigilance when they visit the other country (Khalid, 2013). The history of indo-Pakistan conflict is too complicated in its nature. This conflict is not linked a particular area of interest rather it has encompassed a variety of the issues. This bilateral brawl is based on the differences such as the ideologies and religion. It started from the partition of 1947 when there took place a massive killing of the civilians. Some of the important areas of conflict are Kashmir issue, Siachin glacier confrontation, Sir Creek issue, Tulbul Navigation project and others (Ashraf, 2018).

11. Major Bilateral Disputes

The territory of Kashmir is one of the most beautiful places of the world. It is located in the north and west sides of South Asia. It shares borders with Pakistan, India and China at the same time. The area of Kashmir is about 85,806 sq miles. Before partition, it was not controversial area but after the partition it is divided into Pakistan and India occupied Kashmir which is separated by the line of control which was mutually signed by both countries in 1972 (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1997).

At the time of partition, there were 87% Muslims in the whole population of Jammu and Kashmir. On the other side, the Kashmir Valley was largely dominated by the Muslim population with 93% ratio. According to the parameters of annexation, Kashmir had full right to join Pakistan due to its population proximity to Pakistan. But unfortunately, Kashmir was annexed with India due to the great game of Maharaja of Kashmir and Indian Government. It gave the birth to the most critical issue of South Asia between two nuclear weapon states India and Pakistan. This issue may lead a nuclear war between these two states as four wars have already been fought on this flash point. The issue of Kashmir is also in the court of United Nations but no encouraging steps have been taken by UN too (Amin, 1995).

The current Indian Government is further creating many problems regarding the issue of Kashmir. At the time of annexation, Kashmir was given a special status under article 370 and 35A of Indian constitution. Recently, this special status has been eliminated by this Indian government and the bitterest curfew has been imposed on the poor and innocent people of Kashmir since August 2019. This is further escalating situation between India and Pakistan because Pakistan raised this issue at different international forums to eliminate the illegal restrictions on the Kashmiri people.

Siachin Glacier is another factor of altercation between India and Pakistan. This is the second largest glacier of the world. Both of the states' forces are confronting at this point which makes it unique across the globe as it is the highest fighting place of the world. It is stretched over 3000 sq km above the 5000 meters of sea level. It is located in the Karakorum mountain range (Wirsing, 1986). The origin of the Siachin rift between India and Pakistan can be traced back to 1984 when military operation was launched with the code name of "Meghdoot".

In the result of this operation, India controlled the 2/3 or the Siachin glacier. On the other hand, Pakistan too occupied the best position of this glacier at Gyong La Pass which provided an opportunity to overlook the Nubra River Valley (Wirsing, 1986).

In 1989, both states stepped forward to resolve this issue but as usual all went in vain. Later in 1992, the bilateral talks were again held and Pakistan expected the implementation of the clauses of 1989 agreement. This again concluded nothing due to the India indifference. Pakistan always showed willingness to resolve the bilateral issue but India's attitude is not about to settle bilateral disputes (Sattar, 2013). The majority of people from both sides wish to get rid of all these disputes but the non-willingness and absence of formal level meeting are putting hurdles in the way. The unresponsive attitude of Indian government is creating further problems for both of them (Kumar, 2000).

The Sir Creek issue is another prominent bone of confrontation between India and Pakistan. It is basically a 96 km long belt of water in Rann of Kutch. This boundary is situated between Gujrat (a state of India) and Sindh province of Pakistan. Both countries also struggling to win over this issue too. Many meetings have been held between the representatives of both states but still the issue is unresolved. The Sir Creek issue was also highlighted last time in the SAARC meeting in 2007 and announced a common map. On this common map it was hoped the issue will be resolved soon but no fruitful results received (Khan, 2007).

The bilateral confrontation of India and Pakistan is not limited to Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachin issues rather they are also facing the issue of distribution of water resources. The water issue is the second highlighted issues between India and Pakistan after Kashmir. After the partition, India cut of the supply of water to Pakistan while taking the advantage of her position as upper riparian. Both of them met at different meetings to resolve the issue of water and finally in 1960 they signed the Indus Water Treaty. Under IWT, there three eastern rivers were given to Indian and three western rivers came under the jurisdiction of Pakistan (Indus Waters Treaty, 1960). But it does not mean that IWT resolved the water problem between them rather the situation further went deteriorated later. The construction of Indian dams is challenged by Pakistan because it diverted the water flow of Jhelum River. India continues to violate the clauses of IWT times and again. This issue is also one the bone of contentions between India and Pakistan (Ashraf, 2008).

12. Discussion

The whole of the above discussion results that India does not maintain smooth relations with any one of her neighboring states. India is indulged into the different disputes with her neighbor states which range from territorial, water, ethnic and border management etc. The important point is to note that all of her neighbor states wish to resolve their disputes through diplomatic and peaceful ways. They offer every possible solution to settle the issues but India is not ready to settle these problems. India feels that she is superior in economy, geographical size, military strength and capability which make her proud.

Here it is also important to note one of the basic points of Chanakya's policy whose points have great worth in the Indian foreign policy. Chanakya recommended that policy of hostility should be adopted by the stronger states. This hostility may be open like wars with the poor states or indirectly in the secret ways. The hostility may also be continued through the diplomatic ways. The Indian attitude about these issues evidently exemplifies that she has adopted Chanakya's way to deal with the smaller and weaker states of South Asia. Bangladesh wants to resolve her water and border disputes with India but India is not showing the willingness about these issues. On the other hand, Nepal too wishes to settle the territorial issues like Kalapani but again Indian indifference halts this settlement. All this reveals that India hegemonic attitude is the basic of problems in the smooth functioning of South Asian states. It is the Indian hegemonic role that regional organization of South Asia SAARC is not functioning properly. All of the South Asian states should take some handsome measures to make this organization functioning so that the cooperative culture may be promoted in this region which the basic purpose of SAARC. The idea of this organization was also initiated by a smaller state Bangladesh; hence these smaller states should collaborate to run it again in its true nature.

13. Growing Influence of China in South Asia

The economic relationship is an important area of concern in the modern international system. The more economic ties are the healthier relationship will be. In South Asian region India is the biggest state which shares borders with all of the SAARC members. Being the largest economy of the region, India had been in economic relationship with the smaller states like Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh etc. But now the scenario is changing as China is investing more than India in these South Asian states. China has good relationship with Pakistan since her inception but after the 9/11, she has also established good bilateral relations with rest of the states too. In the contemporary era, the influence of China is fostering day by day (Sahoo, 2013).

Bangladesh who had been in warm relationships with India is now tilting towards China. The inclination of Bangladesh towards India is now being balanced with the investment offers of China. Dhaka has already offered the exploration rights to China at Barakpuria and Chittagong port. This is bringing both of the countries closer to each other (Aneja, 2006). On the other hand, Sri Lanka is also coming closer towards China. Sri Lanka who had been confronting the LTTE issue with India also started to think about the option other than India. Like the other

counties, China has also offered the assistance in the infrastructure development which is welcomed warmly by Sri Lankan government too (Kumar, 2006).

The countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh perceive India as hegemonic state than its mentorship. They do not have trust in India because she change her policies according to her needs. On the other side, they show more interest and trust in China than India (Taneja, 2004). In the recent era, the Chinese investment in South Asia is increasing marvelously. The volume of Chinese trade increased from \$40 billion to \$85 billion in the era of 2006 to 2011. It shows that the volume of Chinese trade doubled in just five years. After 2011, the circumstances are also changing at fast speed as only CPEC investment has reached about \$70 billion. Similarly, the new investment agreements are also being signed with the other SAARC members too (Brunjes, et. al, 2013). Like other smaller states of South Asia, Nepal is establishing the strong bilateral ties with China too. China is again investing and going to invest more in the future in the infrastructure development. The whole picture of power sharing is going to be changed with the keen Chinese involvement in this region (Sahoo, 2013). The major reason behind this change is associated with the rigid, coercive and hegemonic attitude of India with these states. India gave a little economic investment in these countries but showed the more hegemony. These states already wanted to change their policies due to Indian aggressive attitude. On contrary to India, China is giving more and more economic assistance and developmental opportunities and also granting them more respect. This the reason which has converted the policies of these South Asian states from India to China.

14. Conclusion

South Asia is the important region of the world. The importance and uniqueness of this region is associated with the population and nuclear weapon states. India is the biggest state of South Asia as she possesses the largest economy and area. Being the largest state of South Asia, India has adopted an arrogant and hegemonic attitude with her neighboring states. The whole of the above discussion has revealed that India has involved with territorial, water and border disputes. India is confronting the water disputes with Bangladesh as the major tributaries of Bangladesh flow through India. Nepal is also facing the same issues with India like other neighbor states of India. Sri Lanka has the great debate of bilateral issues with India. Lastly, Pakistan and India are two major powers of South Asia. Both of them possess nuclear power. The rivalry of Pakistan and India is not hidden from the world which ranges from cricket grounds to battle fields. Pakistan too has territorial and water issues with India. All of the South Asian countries want to settle these issues but due to the indifference of India all is in vain. The regional organization South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is also not functioning in proper way due to the hegemonic role of India. On the other hand, in the recent era the Chinese influence in the region is growing day by day. In the post-corona period, China is successful in establishing the economic ties with almost all of the South Asian states which has weakened the Indian policies in the region marvelously. All this shows that South Asian region is witnessing a power shift from Indian-American forum to Chinese side.

References

- Amin, T. (1995). *Mass Resistance in Kashmir*. Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies
- Aneja, U. (2006). *China-Bangladesh Relations: An Emerging Strategic Partnership?* Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Special Report No. 33, New Delhi.
- Articles VI and VII of the 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal', July 31, 1950, in *India, Bilateral Treaties and Agreements*, Vol. 1, 1947–1952, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1999.
- Ashraf, M. T. (2018). The Antecedents of Pakistan-India Conflict: Challenges and Prospects for Solution. *Pakistan Vision*, 19(2).
- Bhattari, R. (2005). Geopolitical specialties of Nepal and international approach to conflict transformation, Nepal: Friends for Peace in Jan 2005. <https://indiamadhesi.files.wordpress.com/2008/10/geopolitics-of-nepal.pdf>
- Brunjes, E., Levine, N., & Palmer, M. (2013). China's Increased Trade and Investment in South Asia (Spoiler Alert: It's The Economy). Workshop in International Public Affairs
- Dahal, G. (2018). Foreign Relation of Nepal with China and India. *Journal of Political Science*, XVIII.
- Dar, A. I. (2017). Geopolitics and India's regional Ambitions in South Asia. *Research Gate*, 3(7).
- Feroz Khan, "Security Impediments to Regionalism in South Asia," in *Does South Asia Exist*, 227. <http://www.indianembassythimphu.bt> (India-Bhutan Relations)
- Human Rights Report Watch-2017. india-today.com/itoday/20000612/nation2.
- Indus waters treaty, (1960).
- Islam, M. S. (2011). Water for Security and Development. *New Age*, June 01.
- Islam, M. S. (2011). Water Scarcity and Conflict: A Bangladesh Perspective. *The Daily Star Magazine Forum*, 5,(06).
- Jaishankar, D. (2016). India's Five Foreign Policy Goals: Great Strides, Steep Challenges, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/indias-five-foreign-policy-goals-great-strides-steep-challenges/>

- Jammu and Kashmir. (1997) " In *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*".
- Kadirgamar, L. (2003). 'Securing South Asia', *Hindu*, 29th December
- Karma, U. (2002). "Perceptions of Security" pp 59-79, in Dipankar Banerjee ed., *South Asian Security: Futures*. Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka.
- Khalid, D. I. (2013). Management of Pakistan India Conflicts: An Application of Crisis Decision-Making. *NDU Journal*.
- Khan, R. A. (2007). Sir Creek : The Origin and Development between Pakistan and India. *IPRI Journal*
- Khatri, S. K. (1998). Nepal in the International System: The Limits of Power of a Small State, in *The Political Economy of a Small State*, ed. Ananda Aditya (Kathmandu: NEFAS, 1998), 5–24.
- Kohli, M. (1993) From Dependency to Interdependence- A Study of Indo-Bhutan Relations, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Kumar, A. (2006). *China's Growing Influence in Sri Lanka: Implications for India*. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, IPCS Article No. 2079, New Delhi.
- Kumar, S. (2000). "Trends in Indo-Pakistan Relations." *Strategic Analysis* 24, no. 2: 221-46.
- Maryam M, (2011). "India-Bangladesh Relation: A New Phase of Cooperation" in the *Journal of Regional Studies*, XXIX (3), 47.
- Ministry of Finance and Planning Sri Lanka, *Annual Report (2010)*. (Colombo: Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2011)
- Pant, H. V. (2016). Indian Foreign Policy: An Overview, (India: Oriental Blackswan Private limited).
- Paranjpe, S., & Thomas, R. J. C. (1991). India and South Asia: Resolving the Problems of Regional Dominance and Diversity. in *Regional Hegemons: Threat Perception and Strategic Response*, ed. David J. Myers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc., 1991)
- Paudyal, G. (2013). Border Dispute Between Nepal And India. RESEARCHER I (II) Perspective. *The International Trade Journal*, 27, 111–141
- Peterson, E. R. and Posner, R. A. (2010). The World's Water Challenge. *Journal of Current History*, January.
- Protocol to Article VI of Treaty of Transit Between the Government of India and His Majesty's Government of Nepal', December 6, 1991, in Avtar Singh Bhasin (ed.), *Nepal-India Relations, Documents 1947–June 2005*, Vol. 3, Geetika Publishers, New Delhi, 2005, p. 2276.
- Quassem M. A. (2010). Regional cooperation in water management. *The Daily Star*, January 7.
- Rahman, M. S. (2010). Water Resources in Bangladesh: 50 years of development. *The Daily Star*, January 16.
- Rashid, B. H. (2010). India's water diversion policy may turn on itself, *The Daily Star*, July 11.
- Sahoo, P. (2013). The Growing Dominance of China in South Asia: An Indian
- Sattar, A. (2013). *Pakistan's Foreign Policy, 1947-2012: A Concise History*. Third ed. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Savada, A. M. (1991). Nepal and Bhutan: Country Studies,
- Sharma, M. (1999). In Risky Waters, *Front Line*, 16(19), 19-29.
- Shrestha, B. N. (2006). *Impact of Open Border between Nepal and India*, December 15, 2006, at <http://bordernepal.wordpress.com/tag/uncategorised/page/2/>
- Student protest spreads in Madrass. *The Hindu*, 2013 March 18, <m.thehindu.com>
- Suryanarayan, V. (2013). "India Sri Lanka and Kachchativu Crisis: A fact sheet and possible solution. 2013, May 06, Institute Peace and Conflict studies, www.ipcs.org
- Taneja, N. (2004). India-Pakistan: Trade Relations: Opportunities for Growth. *Economic and Political Weekly* 39: 326–327
- Thalpawila, O. (2014). India-Sri Lanka Relations: In Post Civil War Era in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Social Sciences; ISSN: 2348 4411 (Volume-2, Issue-1)*.
- Tharoor, S. (2012). Pax Indica: India and the world of 21st century, India: Penguin
- The Kathmandu Nexus', *India Today*, June 12, 2000, New Delhi, at <http://www.>
- Wirsing, R. G. (1986). The Siachen Glacier Dispute–I: The Territorial Dimension." *Strategic Studies (Islamabad)* 10(1), 58.
- Yadav, L. B. (1996). *Indo-Bhutan Relations and China Intervention*, New Delhi: Anmol Publications