

**No. 76**

**DEDUCING INDIA'S GRAND STRATEGY  
OF REGIONAL HEGEMONY FROM  
HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL  
PERSPECTIVES**

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**APRIL 2005**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to answer if a rising India will repeat the pattern of all rising great powers since the Napoleonic times by attempting regional hegemony. This research deduces India's grand strategy of regional hegemony from historical and conceptual perspectives. The underlying assumption is that even though India has never consciously and deliberately pursued a grand strategy, its historical experience and geo-strategic environment have substantially conditioned its security behaviour and desired goals. To this extent, this research develops a theoretical framework to analyse grand strategy. This framework is then applied to five pan-Indian powers – the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Mughals, British India and the Republic of India – to understand their security behavior.

It is discerned that all the five pan-Indian powers studied have demonstrated trends that display remarkable continuity in their security behavior. These trends can then be said to constitute India's grand strategic paradigm and include – (1) A realist drive towards power maximisation due to structural reasons, including the use of force when necessary, under the veneer of morality; (2) Strategic autonomy in its security affairs and strategic unity of South Asia through an attempt to establish regional hegemony in the subcontinent; (3) Warfare as a part of statecraft as opposed to the exclusive realm of the military, and with a tendency to dominate, assimilate or accommodate opponents, as opposed to decisively destroying them; (4) A defensive strategic orientation against extra-regional powers and with a strategic orientation of 'offensive defense' in the subcontinent; and (5) A remarkable ability to gradually adapt to changing political and military trends while remaining consistent in the four strategic trends mentioned above.

On the basis of these trends it is concluded that a rising India will behave in accordance with the core features of the theory of offensive realism. As India becomes wealthy, it will work towards maximising its political and military power; will avoid alliances that curb its strategic autonomy; will seek regional hegemony in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, and will resist extra-regional influence in these regions; and will seek to become an extra-regional power in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.

**KEYWORDS** – grand strategy, regional hegemony, pan-Indian power, strategic autonomy, strategic unity, strategic orientation

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# DEDUCING INDIA'S GRAND STRATEGY OF REGIONAL HEGEMONY FROM HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Do rising great powers attempt regional hegemony? The only regional hegemon in modern history and the current international system – the United States – established and consolidated its regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere by end of the nineteenth century, before it started participating in world affairs as a great power.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with Napoleonic France, all rising great powers, e.g., Wilhelmine Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War tried unsuccessfully to establish regional hegemony. India is a rising great power.<sup>2</sup> It is the world's largest democracy, is a secular state, has the world's second largest population and is the fourth largest economy when measured by purchasing power parity. It is also a declared nuclear weapons state with the world's third largest army and amongst the top dozen states in the world in terms of overall defense expenditure. Over the past two decades or so (especially after it opened its markets in 1991), India has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies in the world.<sup>3</sup> In tandem with its economic growth, India has been slowly but surely modernizing its conventional military capabilities<sup>4</sup> as well as its nuclear and missile capabilities<sup>5</sup>. This has led some long time India-watchers to conclude that India is in the

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The author would like to thank Surjit Mansingh, Satu Limaye, T V Paul, Lawrence Prabhakar, Arvind Kumar, Bernard Loo, Amitav Acharya, and Evelyn Goh for their helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts. Responsibility for all errors and omissions remains the author's alone.

<sup>1</sup> For America's rise as a great power and a regional hegemon in the nineteenth century, see John J Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W W Norton & Company, 2001), p. 238-252.

<sup>2</sup> Baldev Raj Nayar and T V Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> Arvind Virmani. (2004). *India's Economic Growth: From Socialist Rate of Growth to Bharatiya Rate of Growth*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.icrier.org/wp122.pdf> [2004, July 29]. According to Virmani, since 1980-81, India's growth rate has increased from 3.5% p.a. to 5.7%p.a., and is currently "stuck" around 5.8% p.a. Another study has concluded that India's economy is estimated to emerge as Asia's second largest by 2015 even if it continues to grow at a relatively modest growth rate of 5.5% p.a. See Charles Wolf, Anil Bamezai, K C Yeh, Benjamin Zycher, *Asian Economic Trends and Their Security Implications* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation Report, 2000), pp. 43-50 and 63-69.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy D Hoyt, "Modernizing the Indian Armed Forces", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Summer 2000, pp. 17-22. Also see, International Institute of Strategic Studies, "India's Military Spending: Prospect for Modernization", *Strategic Comments*, Vol. 6 (July 2000), and "India's Conventional Build-Up: Unsettling the Strategic Balance?", *Strategic Comments*, Vol. 10 (December 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Ashley J Tellis. (2001). *India's Emerging Nuclear Doctrine: Exemplifying the Lessons of the Nuclear Revolution*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/vol12no2/v12n2.pdf> [2004, July 29].

process of acquiring the capabilities to “rise through the international order” to become a great power.<sup>6</sup> The behavior of a rising state is a key concern of international politics. So, the crucial question is therefore how India will behave in the years to come.

In spite of its growing strategic capabilities and having tested nuclear weapons, no Indian government has ever released a national security strategy, i.e., India has not yet enunciated its grand strategy, and it is unclear about its grand strategy.<sup>7</sup> However, given its sheer size, location, and its growing economic, military and nuclear capabilities, it is clear that India will be a key actor in South Asia with the ability to provide or deny regional strategic stability. Moreover, its choices will also affect the countries and peoples in the region stretching from the Middle East and Central Asia to East and Southeast Asia, including the Indian Ocean littoral. This paper attempts to deduce India’s grand strategy from its history as well as theory. It seeks to understand if India’s long history has in any way shaped its conception of military power and national security.<sup>8</sup> More crucially, it seeks to answer if a rising India will repeat the pattern of the all rising great powers by attempting hegemony in its own region.<sup>9</sup>

## **2 THEORY OF GRAND STRATEGY**

In his masterpiece called *Vom Kriege* (1833) on the science of war, the greatest of all Western writers on war, Carl von Clausewitz defined strategy as the use or threat of force “to achieve the military objectives, and by extension, the political purpose of war”<sup>10</sup>. Military historian Basil H Liddell Hart found the Clausewitzian definition of strategy very narrow due to its focus on the military and the battlefield. He therefore introduced the term ‘grand strategy’ (or ‘higher strategy’) “to bring out the sense of ‘policy in execution’”.<sup>11</sup> According to Liddell Hart, the role of grand strategy was “to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen P Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> India’s strategic elite have just begun a debate on the need for a grand strategy. See Brigadier P S Siwach. (2004). *A Perspective on Grand Strategy and Planning in India*, [Online]. Available: [http://www.usiofindia.org/article\\_apr\\_jun04\\_5.htm](http://www.usiofindia.org/article_apr_jun04_5.htm) [2004, December 26]. Also see, K P S Gill. (2004). *What’s India’s Grand Strategy?*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.outlookindia.com/full.asp?fodname=20041216&fname=kps&sid=1> [2004, December 26].

<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the approach taken in this paper, most analyses of international security issues focus on the structure of the system, domestic political circumstances of state(s) being studied, and the personalities of the key political and military leaders involved. See Kenneth N Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, Revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> China is the other rising great power that may attempt to establish regional hegemony.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Paret, “Introduction”, in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, edited by Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> B H Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Second Revised Edition (New York: Meridian, 1991), p. 322.

nation, or a band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined by fundamental policy”.<sup>12</sup> Liddell Hart explained that grand strategy controlled military strategy and looked beyond victory in war to the subsequent peace – even if only from one’s own point of view.

Since then, many influential historians and strategists have sought to define their own conceptualization of grand strategy to enhance the concept’s analytical value. According to Edward Mead Earle, “The highest type of strategy – sometimes called grand strategy – is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory”.<sup>13</sup> John M Collins gave one the most comprehensive definitions of grand strategy when he defined it as:

[T]he art and science of deploying national power under all circumstances to exert desired degrees and types of control over the opposition through threats, force, indirect pressures, diplomacy, subterfuge, and other imaginative means, thereby satisfying national security interests and objectives . . . Grand strategy, if successful, alleviates any need for violence. Equally important, it looks beyond victory toward a lasting peace . . . Grand strategy controls military strategy, which is only one of its elements.<sup>14</sup>

What these definitions successfully established was that grand strategy had to necessarily look beyond the battlefield and military victory, and that it was as much concerned with peace as with war. However, these definitions fell short of establishing a rigorous social-scientific methodology to study grand strategy. On the basis of more recent scholarship, this study attempts to develop a systematic approach to study grand strategy.

## **Analyzing Grand Strategy**

### National Objectives

Paul Kennedy defines grand strategy as “the balancing of ends and means, both in peacetime and in war”.<sup>15</sup> Highlighting the centrality of the political element in grand strategy, he further adds, “Given all the independent variables that come into play, grand strategy can never be exact or fore-ordained. It relies, upon constant and intelligent reassessment of the polity’s

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Mead Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. viii.

<sup>14</sup> John M Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1973), pp. 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 4.

ends and means; it relies upon wisdom and judgment”.<sup>16</sup> It is important to understand that grand strategy is neither the end-state alone nor just the available means; in fact, it represents the relationship between the two. According to Barry Posen, “A grand strategy is a political-military means-ends chain, a state’s theory about how it can best ‘cause’ security for itself”.<sup>17</sup> Based on these definitions it can be concluded that grand strategy denotes “a country’s broadest approach to the pursuit of its *national objectives* in the *international system*.”<sup>18</sup> So the first step in analysing a state’s grand strategy is to discern its national objectives. A nation may pursue many different national objectives, e.g., survival, economic interdependence, promotion of democratic institutions and human rights abroad.

### International Environment

The next step involves understanding the international system within which the state seeks to pursue its national objectives, for example, is it the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Asia, Northeast Asia or South Asia? “Grand strategy . . . exists within international politics but does not coincide with its boundaries”.<sup>19</sup> Understanding this international environment “is essential to the formulation [or analysis] of any sensible strategic policy”.<sup>20</sup>

### Grand Strategic Means and Ends

We need to understand the ends that a state seeks as well as the means it employs to meet these ends. In the case of the United States, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganisation Act requires the President to produce an annual statement of the National Security Strategy.<sup>21</sup> The most recent US National Security Strategy document appeared in 2002.<sup>22</sup> The ends that a state seeks and the means with which it shall seek them may be discerned from such an enunciation of a national security strategy. However, in the case of countries such as India, a comprehensive national security strategy has never been

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Barry R Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Robert H Dorff, “A Primer in Strategy Development”, in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, edited by Joseph R Cerami and James F Holcomb, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), p. 12. Emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Edward N Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 210.

<sup>20</sup> Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, “Introduction: On strategy”, in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, edited by Williamson Murray, Macgregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Dorff, op. cit., p. 16. According to many analysts including Dorff, National Security Strategy is the same as Grand Strategy.

<sup>22</sup> The White House. (2002). *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf> [2004, December 27].



published. As a result, it becomes difficult to identify such a state's desired ends and available means. At the same time, just because a state has not published a national security strategy document does not mean that it lacks a national security strategy. At a conceptual level, a national security strategy may be "declaratory, actual, or ideal".<sup>23</sup> A state's 'actual' national security strategy may be discerned from its history by studying its military, economic and diplomatic behavior (means) and the outcomes of that behavior (ends). According to Colin Gray, "Means and ends will conduct a strategic discourse whether or not a polity has an explicit strategy (in the sense of plan)".<sup>24</sup>

There is a growing body of literature that deals with the subject of grand strategic means. According to Alastair Iain Johnston, who believes that it is not useful to subsume grand strategic ends and means within the same concept (i.e. grand strategy), states pursue three ideal grand strategic means of security – accommodationist, defensive and offensive/expansionist.<sup>25</sup> The primary problem with this typological approach is that it is non-exhaustive and even overlapping. Grand strategic means may be discerned by asking appropriate questions based on an alternative means-based definition of grand strategy. Robert J Art states that grand strategy "deals with the full range of goals that a state should seek, but it concentrates primarily on how the military instrument should be employed to achieve them".<sup>26</sup> Based on a natural extension of Art's definition, it can be concluded that grand strategic means deal with instruments of force, threat and action (as opposed to the military instrument alone). Consequently, grand strategic means may be discerned by answering two inter-related questions – (1) What are the instruments of force, threat and action available to the state? How shall they be employed? (2) What is the given state's strategic orientation? Strategic orientation represents a state's overall security outlook. A typology similar to that provided by Johnston may be used to understand a state's strategic orientation. This concept which operates at the grand strategic level should not be confused with the state's military strategy or doctrine.

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<sup>23</sup> The actual grand strategy of a nation may or may not be different from its declared grand strategy. To understand the difference between these three categories of grand strategy, see J Boone Bartholomees, Jr., "A Survey of Strategic Thought", in *US Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, edited by J Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), p. 82.

<sup>24</sup> Colin S Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 112-117.

<sup>26</sup> Robert J Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 2.

On the other hand, there is limited literature on the subject of grand strategic ends, and there is no comprehensive list of typologies of grand strategic ends. In his brilliant work on strategy, Luttwak mentions a range of grand strategic ends that states seek – both implicit and explicit. Some of these include status quo, more power over other states and territorial expansion.<sup>27</sup> Since, it is not easy to identify grand strategic ends, cues can be taken from a state's geography (both its political geography as well as the geography of the international environment where it pursues its national objectives) in addition to its historical experiences.<sup>28</sup> Deductions can then be made about its current grand strategic ends based on these cues combined with international relations theory. The fundamental question with regards to grand strategic ends is the country's perception of itself and what role it aspires to play in the international system.

In effect, a state's grand strategic paradigm may be discerned by answering the following four questions<sup>29</sup>:

- (1) What are the given state's national objectives?
- (2) What is the international system within which the state pursues these objectives?
- (3) What are the available grand strategic means?
- (4) What grand strategic ends does the given state seek?

At this stage, two caveats must be highlighted. First, grand strategy is a dynamic concept and can change slowly with time in response to external and internal stimuli (for example, conquest/independence, war/its outcome, change in the structure of the international system, domestic revolution, technological breakthrough). Second, grand strategy cannot explain all policies and actions. A particular policy and its outcome is the product of a dynamic interaction between many factors including structure, people, politics, technology, ethics, economics, time and chance among others. By contrast, a state's grand strategy provides an understanding of its long-term foreign and security policy goals. The claim being made is that a state will attempt to realize its grand strategy irrespective of how close a particular policy choice may be to this desired outcome.

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<sup>27</sup> Luttwak, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-214.

<sup>28</sup> On the influence of geography and history on grand strategy, see Murray and Grimsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-12.

<sup>29</sup> It is theoretically possible for a small state to have a grand strategy. However, the term is generally used for rising and great powers. See Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 186 n18.

The aim of this study is to determine if a rising India will attempt regional hegemony. If yes, how will India define the 'region' where it aspires to emerge as a hegemon? Since a state called India did not exist until 1947, the terms 'India' and 'Indian' as used in this study are defined in Section 3. The methodology used in this paper is explained in Section 4. Section 5 attempts to answer the four questions mentioned above for the various pan-Indian states that have existed in the past. Based on deductive reasoning from India's history and international relations theory, Section 6 delineates India's grand strategic paradigm. Section 7 provides a glimpse into India's future security behavior.

### **3 DEFINING INDIA AND INDIAN**

The region known as the Indian subcontinent is isolated from the larger Eurasian landmass with the Himalayas to its north and northeast, the mighty Brahmaputra River and the rainforests of Assam to its east, the Hindu Kush, the Sulaiman and the Kirthar mountains to its northwest, the mighty Indus River and deserts to its west. Peninsular India is surrounded by the Arabian Sea to its west, the Bay of Bengal to its east and the Indian Ocean to its south. The Vindhya-Satpura Range marks off peninsular India (the Deccan Plateau, Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and the coastal regions) from the Indo-Gangetic plains to its north. This region, which has been home to several regional political systems since the dawn of the Indus Valley Civilization around 2600 B.C., is referred to as the Indian subcontinent or India (before August 15, 1947).

Next, it is important to understand the group of people referred to as "Indians". The Indian subcontinent has seen waves of migrations and invasions of several racial, tribal, ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic and other groups through the millennia. The racial make-up of the early Indians is not certain, but it is presumed that they were Negritos, who were followed by proto-Australoids into the subcontinent.<sup>30</sup> They were followed by a proto-Dravidian speaking paleo-Mediterranean sub-racial group around 6000 B.C. This group is hypothesized to be the dominant class of the Indus Valley Civilization. In second millennium B.C., a Vedic Sanskrit speaking Caucasoid sub-race, the Indo-Aryans migrated into the subcontinent from Persia (and Central Asia before that). The Vedic Sanskrit speaking racial group, the

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<sup>30</sup> These racial groups can be found among the Munda language speaking *adivasis* (Sanskrit for "first inhabitants" or aboriginals) of India, though often admixed with other races that were to follow them into the subcontinent.

proto-Dravidian speaking racial group and the *adivasis* intermixed and laid the foundations of the Indian civilization.<sup>31</sup>

Several continuous small-scale migrations and invasions into the subcontinent continued through the millennia. This resulted in further cultural, religious, linguistic, and genetic diversity in the region. Among the documented invasions that added significantly to the ethnic mix of the subcontinent are those of the Scythians, Parthians, Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Turks and Afghans.<sup>32</sup> Importantly, no pure racial type exists in the subcontinent today due to considerable internal migration and miscegenation over the course of time despite caste, ethnic, regional, religious and other barriers. “Although each of these conquerors viewed the Subcontinent as an extension of their exogenous power base, they came to see the world through Indo-centric eyes. The absorptive power of the Indian society has always been impressive”.<sup>33</sup> According to Dalrymple who was speaking somewhat more romantically about India, “India has always had a strange way with her conquerors. In defeat, she beckons them in, then slowly seduces, assimilates and transforms them”.<sup>34</sup> In this study, all migrants/invaders who stayed on in the subcontinent and adopted pre-existing subcontinental culture while contributing their own diversity are considered “Indian” (before 1947). Also, an empire/state is considered Indian if it was ruled from within the subcontinent.

However, the people of the subcontinent never called themselves Indians. The people of the South Asia have historically had a complex set of multiple identities based on ethnicity, religion, caste, region and language. Moreover, ‘Indians’ have never called their land ‘India’ until modern times. The Indo-Aryans called the river Indus *Sindhu*, which was changed to “Hindu”<sup>35</sup> by the Persians. In turn, the Greeks changed the name of the river again to

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<sup>31</sup> Abraham Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus: The Seeding of the Indian Civilisation* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India Ltd., 2000), pp. 15-179.

<sup>32</sup> For a brief history of these invasions cum assimilation see Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002), pp. 213-225, 286-7, and 438-441. Also see David Ludden, *India and South Asia: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002), pp. 69-72.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, op. cit., 11.

<sup>34</sup> William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love & Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> The term Hindu was initially used as a geographic term to refer to the land around and east of the Indus River. The Indo-Turkic/Afghan rulers of the Delhi Sultanates (13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century) first used the word Hindu to refer to all of their non-Muslim subjects. It is interesting to note that none of the scriptures of Hinduism as we know it today use the term “Hindu”. These scriptures refer to the various castes – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras – instead. “The clubbing together of all the castes, non-castes and sects under one label – Hindu – would have been strange to most people and even repugnant to some”. See Thapar, *Early India*, pp. 438-441.

“Indus”. The word India is derived from the word Indus. In the late medieval period, the Europeans started using the term India to refer to the subcontinent.<sup>36</sup> However, a state called India never existed before August 15, 1947, when British colonial rule ended in the subcontinent. In this study, post-1947, the word India refers exclusively to the Dominion/Republic of India.<sup>37</sup>

The diversity in ethnicity as explained above is just one of India’s diverse components. The subcontinent has also been home to many religions including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, tribal traditions etc. Many of these religions themselves have deep schisms such as the caste system of Hinduism, which is also present in all Indian religions including Islam and Christianity. Additionally, there are major regional, cultural and linguistic differences in the subcontinent. Noting this immense diversity, independent India’s first Prime Minister Nehru remarked that India was like some “ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously”.<sup>38</sup> According to Eraly, “It is today politically fashionable to speak of certain community and its culture as truly Indian, but the fact is that there are no pure native Indians, or any pure native Indian culture. ... All Indians today are descendants of migrants or invaders. ... The only valid definition of Indian is the legal definition”.<sup>39</sup> In this study, after 1947, the citizens of the Dominion/Republic of India are referred to as Indians.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS**

It must be emphasized that this is not a study of warfare in the Indian subcontinent. Nor does it make any pretensions of being a complete historical overview. It is certainly not a study of India’s military strategy or doctrine. It is in fact the study of India’s grand strategy from

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<sup>36</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> “India” itself is a contested term and the “idea of India” is a much-debated subject. According to Khilnani, the Republic of India, at its core, was a product of a political imagination, the “possibility that India could be united into a single political community was the wager of India’s modern, educated, urban elite, whose intellectual horizons were extended by these modern ideas [individual rights, democracy etc.] and whose sphere of action was expanded by these modern agencies. It was a wager on an idea: the idea of India”. See Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2001), p. 5. The Dominion of India that became independent on 15 August 1947, became a republic on 26 January 1950.

<sup>38</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Abraham Eraly. (2001). *Just a Legal Indian*, [Online]. Available: [http://www.outlookindia.com/full.asp?fname=column%20Eraly\(F\)&fodname=20010820&sid=1](http://www.outlookindia.com/full.asp?fname=column%20Eraly(F)&fodname=20010820&sid=1) [2004, September 9].

historical and conceptual perspectives. According to recent scholarship, historical and social-scientific approaches to international relations are complementary.<sup>40</sup> “There can be no systematic or coherent development of grand theory in International Relations unless it incorporates both the systemic and the historical dimensions of the subject”.<sup>41</sup>

The Indian subcontinent has been home to several regional political systems through its long history since the kingdom of Magadha – the first organized regional state in the subcontinent which emerged around 600 B.C. in the Ganga Valley. According to Schwartzberg, only 9 of 63 major powers of the subcontinent in the period between 560 B.C. and 1976 A.D. can be characterized as pan-Indian.<sup>42</sup> Schwartzberg divided the subcontinent analytically into five geographic regions – Northwest, North Center, Northeast, West and South – and defined pan-Indian powers as those that extended over significant portions of at least four of these five regions, including areas both north and south of the Vindhya-Satpura Range. He defined major powers as those that extended over significant portions of at least two regions. The nine pan-Indian powers according to his study were the Mauryas, Guptas, Rashtrakutas, Khaljis, Tughluqs, Mughals, Marathas, British India and the Republic of India.<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to note that all the pan-Indian powers (except for British India) of Schwartzberg’s study were centered in areas that are today a part of the Republic of India.

In this study, the four questions related to a state’s grand strategic paradigm (see Section 2) are answered for four of these pan-Indian powers – the Mauryas (321 B.C. – 185 B.C.), the Guptas (321 A.D. – 500 A.D.), the Mughals (1526 A.D. – 1720 A.D.) and the Republic of India (1947 A.D. – present). The same set of questions is also answered for British India. However, unlike the other pan-Indian powers, all of which were ‘Indian’, British India was a part of the British Empire, i.e., it was not an independent ‘Indian’ empire/state, and its politico-military behavior was geared toward the defense of the British Empire.

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<sup>40</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, “History, Science, and the Study of International Relations”, and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, “The Benefits of a Social-Scientific Approach to Studying International Affairs”, in *Explaining International Relations Since 1945*, edited by Ngaire Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little, ed., *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. vii.

<sup>42</sup> See Chapter XIV, “A Geopolitical Synopsis: The Evolution of Regional Power Configurations in the Indian Subcontinent”, in Joseph E Schwartzberg *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> impr., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>43</sup> Of these nine pan-Indian powers, seven were centered either in the North Center or the Northeast while the remaining two – Rashtrakutas and Marathas (both short-lived) – were centered in the West. No pan-Indian power centered in the South or the Northwest has ever existed in the subcontinent. For a detailed geopolitical analysis of why the dominant tradition of statecraft has existed in the north (center and east), see Schwartzberg, op. cit.

Only pan-Indian powers are included in this research because the subject of this study – the Republic of India – is a pan-Indian power.<sup>44</sup> The aim of this study is then to discern if there are any unique characteristics in the security behavior of pan-Indian powers and the goals that they seek. The historical insights relating to the security behavior of five pan-Indian powers – the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Mughals, British India and the Republic of India – are combined with international relations theoretical perspectives to deduce India’s grand strategy. The underlying assumption is that even though India has never consciously and deliberately pursued a grand strategy, its historical experience and its geostrategic environment have substantially conditioned its security behavior and desired goals.

### Defining Hegemony

Since the term hegemony has been mentioned several times in this study, it is necessary to understand the meaning of this term. According to Gilpin, a system or sub-system may be defined as hegemonic if the distribution of economic and military power disproportionately favors one state that dominates all the ‘lesser’ states in that system. He adds that hegemony is a function of power, prestige and influence, and as such is incalculable. It can only be tested on the battlefield.<sup>45</sup> However, according to another theorist, “For hegemony to obtain, power must be sufficiently concentrated in one state to “lay down the law” to others . . . In the hegemonic view, preponderance leads to peace, as no challenger will unleash war against an obviously superior opponent”.<sup>46</sup> In the absence of war, the only indicator of hegemony is economic power, as economic power is the foundation of military power.<sup>47</sup> As a result, traditional indicators of power such as economic wealth, military manpower, demography can be used as *indicators* of hegemony. According to Mearsheimer, given the difficulty to project military power across seas and oceans, and the impossible task of obtaining clear-cut nuclear superiority, a state can never become a global hegemon. The best outcome a great

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<sup>44</sup> The remaining five pan-Indian powers of Schwartzberg’s study are not the subjects of this research. The Rashtrakutas were pan-Indian for only three decades, whereas the Khaljis and the Tughluqs were pan-Indian for only one and two decades respectively. Since they could never effectively consolidate and sustain their short-lived preponderance, they have not been the subjects of this study. Under the Marathas, major portions of the subcontinent formed a loosely knitted confederacy, and not a unified/centralized state like that of the Mauryas, Guptas, Mughals or the Republic of India. Moreover, the Marathas were pan-Indian for barely three decades in the eighteenth century after the decline of the Mughals and hence have not been included in this study.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 28-33.

<sup>46</sup> William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Mearsheimer, op. cit. 55-82.

power can hope for is regional hegemony as the concept of hegemony can be easily applied to a regional system, i.e. a distinct geographic entity.<sup>48</sup>

## **5 DECIPHERING INDIA'S GRAND STRATEGY**

In this section, I shall answer the four questions related to a state's grand strategic paradigm as explained in Section 2 for four pan-Indian powers – the Mauryas<sup>49</sup>, the Guptas, the Mughals and the Republic of India. I will also provide answers to this same set of questions as applied to British India to show that British India's security behavior enlarged on pre-existing subcontinental politico-military strategies.

### **5.1 What are the given state's national security objectives?**

According to Alagappa, the structure of the Indic system [the system of states in the Indian subcontinent] was anarchic, i.e. it was analogous to the contemporary anarchical international system. He further added that in the Indic system relative power played a central role in interstate relations.<sup>50</sup> This is also true for the system of states in post-1947 Indian subcontinent (or South Asia), as no regional government exists in the subcontinent over and above the nation-state. In this study, it is presumed that the primary national security objective of the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Mughals and the Republic of India was/is survival. In other words, these pan-Indian powers were concerned with their territorial integrity as well as the autonomy of their domestic political order. This is not to say that these states did not pursue any other goals. States pursue many national goals besides survival and national security. However, survival (and security) is their primary objective because states are

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<sup>48</sup> Mearsheimer, op. cit., pp. 40-42, 140-147.

<sup>49</sup> According to Eraly, the Arthashastra is both a prescriptive and a descriptive text and presents a more or less true picture of the Mauryan administration. As a result, Mauryan practices in foreign policy, diplomacy, and war will be discerned from their security behavior as well the Arthashastra. See *Gem in the Lotus*, pp. 429-430.

<sup>50</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, "International Politics in Asia: The Historical Context", in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, edited by Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 74. Alagappa speculated that the Indic system might have ceased to function with the advent of Muslim rule in India and further said that it certainly died out with the advent of British rule. However, he provided no explanation for what he meant by "Muslim rule", e.g., did it begin with the Delhi Sultanate or the Mughal Empire, and why he thought that the Indic system collapsed under the Muslims? What is indeed apparent from the subcontinent's history is that except for the brief period of British colonialism, the Indic system has been home to several large and small states, with concerns for relative gain being their common characteristic. This is as true for the period under "Muslim rule" (starting with the Delhi Sultanates till the collapse of the Mughal Empire) as for pre-Islamic South Asia. Anarchy (the absence of a supranational government) has been the defining characteristic of the Indic system (past and present).



unlikely to be in a position to pursue other goals if their survival and independence as a distinct political entity is threatened.

## **5.2 What is the international system within which the state pursues these objectives?**

In an anarchical international system, survival is the primary goal of states. The Mauryas, Guptas, Mughals and the Republic of India engaged in power politics and power balancing (internal and external) to ensure state survival. This made the international system of these states an arena of rivalry, conflict and even war. The Mauryas, the Guptas and the Mughals sought to ensure their national survival in the system of states within the Indian subcontinent. Even though the subcontinent witnessed several migrations, raids and invasions of extra-regional peoples and rulers, the states of the Indic system in general and the Mauryas, the Guptas and the Mughals in particular sought security and survival within the confines of the subcontinent. For reasons of geography, culture/religion, and administration, these powers did not conquer territories beyond the subcontinent.<sup>51</sup> No pan-Indian power ever attempted to cross the geographical divide of the Hindu Kush Mountains between South Asia and Central/West Asia.

From Kabul the passes through the Hindu Kush to the north and west ... [are] far more difficult to cross and only traversable during a few months after April when there ... [is] little snow and the streams . . . [are] low . . . [T]he southern passes across the Sulaiman hills of the Bolan, Sangar and Gomal ... [are] avoided [during winters] because of the extreme cold. During spring torrents could obliterate armies that ... [try] to traverse the narrow passes too early in the season. During midsummer, searing heat and lack of water ... [make] travel virtually impossible. Even during autumn there ... [can] be major logistical problems because the pastoralists of the region would travel eastward making it impossible to hire camels for the westward trip.<sup>52</sup>

According to Larus who was speaking about pre-Islamic (i.e., Buddhist-Hindu) India, the Central Asians who migrated to the Indian subcontinent found the land there so fertile that they saw no reason to conquer territories beyond the subcontinent. Moreover, the concept of 'purity' associated with the caste-based social system discouraged travel by sea as well as naval activity.<sup>53</sup> Under the Indo-Persian imperial authority of the Mughals, sea voyages were

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<sup>51</sup> Alagappa, "International Politics in Asia", p. 74.

<sup>52</sup> Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare – Indian Frontiers and High Roads to Empire, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 23-4.

<sup>53</sup> For a description of culture/religion-based explanations, see Joel Larus, *Culture and Political-Military Behavior: The Hindus in pre-Modern India* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1979).

an activity for pious Muslims on pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the Mughals were descendants of Central Asian nomads who had never seen the seas until their campaigns in Gujarat and Bengal. As a result, they did not appreciate the strategic importance of navies.

This does not mean that the Indian subcontinent lived in isolation from the rest of the world. Indian cultural, religious, and economic influence radiated outside the subcontinent in regions as diverse as Central Asia, Southeast Asia, China and the Western world. Moreover, constant and continuous migrations and invasions into India meant that it was in continuous contact with the outside world from the earliest times. The Mauryas exchanged embassies, maintained economic links and even sent Buddhist missionaries to the Hellenic world, Central Asia, Persia, Tibet, and Southeast Asia.<sup>55</sup> The Guptas maintained cultural and perhaps even economic links with parts of Southeast Asia.<sup>56</sup> The Mughals were in constant economic and cultural discourse with Persia, Turkey and Central Asia.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, European courtiers and even missionaries had a presence in Mughal India.<sup>58</sup> These examples demonstrate that while the realm of international politics was much wider for the Mauryas, the Guptas and the Mughals, they sought security and survival within the geographic boundaries of the Indian subcontinent.

This subcontinental outlook changed with the dawn of the British Raj. The Anglo-French wars in peninsular India in the 1740s taught the British that naval power held the key to success on Indian battlefields. After Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, the threat of a Russian invasion through Afghanistan and/or Persia with or without an alliance with France led to the so-called 'Great Game'<sup>59</sup> for the control over Central Asia. The strategic defense of India led the British to create a *cordon sanitaire* of 'buffer states' along the periphery of the Indian subcontinent – in Persia and Afghanistan to keep the Russians out, and in Siam (Thailand) to keep the French away.<sup>60</sup> The British also established a naval base and stationed an Anglo-Indian garrison at Aden. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this policy was replicated in Singapore.

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<sup>54</sup> Ludden, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>55</sup> Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 124-136.

<sup>56</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 284.

<sup>57</sup> Abraham Eraly, *The Last Spring: The Lives and Times of the Great Mughals* (New Delhi: Viking, 1997), p. 158.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183-229.

<sup>59</sup> Captain Arthur Connolly of British East India Company had coined the phrase 'The Great Game' in mid-1800s to describe the contest for supremacy between Czarist Russia and Victorian England in Central Asia.

<sup>60</sup> For similar reasons, even Tibet was cultivated as a buffer state.

After emerging victorious at Trafalgar in 1805, and with the occupation of Cape of Good Hope (1795) and Mauritius (1809), the Indian Ocean was turned into a 'British lake'.

British naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean had become a pre-condition for the survival of the British Raj. In spite of these external threats, the British were always acutely aware that so long as independent and well-armed hostile groups and states remained in the subcontinent, survival of their Indian empire was at risk (especially with the possible formation of an alliance between an external power and a well-armed hostile subcontinental group/state).<sup>61</sup> The emergence of colonialism meant that India now sought security in the global international system. However, even within this international system, the salience of the Indian subcontinent continued. Colonialism also highlighted the strategic importance of control over the Indian Ocean for the defense of India.<sup>62</sup>

The partition of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan meant that a serious subcontinental threat to the survival of India was born simultaneously with its own independence in 1947. Delhi also faced the onerous task of domestic political consolidation. The magnitude of this task was compounded by the fact that post-independence territorial boundaries in the subcontinent divided ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groups into citizens of different countries. This development resulted in internal security concerns that extended across political boundaries into neighboring states. With the occupation of Tibet by China in the 1950s, India faced a serious security threat from China for the first time in the history of these two ancient civilizations. The emerging Cold War international system meant that India's security could also be threatened by the US or the former Soviet Union if they (or any other major external power) allied with a subcontinental state hostile to India. Control of the Indian Ocean was also deemed important by India, however, due to its obsession with Pakistan, internal security threats and socio-developmental problems, India's naval power did not develop sufficiently during the Cold War. This security outlook was primarily a result of India's history and the structure of the emerging international system.

Independent India also depends upon the West (including Israel) and Russia (the Soviet Union in the past) for advanced civilian technology as well as military technology. India

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<sup>61</sup> Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making of British India* (London: Abacus, 2003), p. 20, 63-147, 368.

<sup>62</sup> While British India sought security in the wider international system, the Indian subcontinent had ceased to survive as an independent entity or a group of independent entities.

began a massive industrialization program after independence and also looks toward the Middle East and Persian Gulf for its energy needs. For reasons related to its growing energy requirements commensurating with its economic growth, India is increasingly looking toward Central Asia as well as Southeast Asia. Likewise, as its economy expands, India is looking toward the Greater Middle East, Central Asia and Southeast Asia to cultivate new export markets as well as sources of foreign investment. As a result, independent India has sought security and survival in the international system including the Indian Ocean Region. However, the primary focus continues to remain on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>63</sup>

### **5.3 What are the available grand strategic means?**

*5.3.1 What are the instruments of force, threat, and action available to the state? How shall they be employed?*

#### Mauryan Empire

Kautilya, the author of Arthashastra and the Chief Minister of Chandragupta<sup>64</sup>, sanctioned the use of covert actions, spies, assassinations, sowing discord among enemy leaders, spread of disinformation, making and breaking treaties as and when they suited national interests, in addition to a host of other ‘hyper-realist’ stratagems to subdue and subjugate the enemy. According to him, the enemy must be dominated/accommodated or defeated by clever stratagems. However, Kautilya was very aware that stratagems would work only when backed by credible military power.<sup>65</sup> The Mauryans had a large and professionally trained standing army maintained by the state.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, wars were the last resort. Kautilya recognised that there was no glory in war.

“In ... [ancient] India, ... [diplomacy] was conceived as a quasi-military activity. In this context, negotiation was a strategic device, designed to lead to victory rather than to

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<sup>63</sup> Cohen, op. cit. In particular, see the Chapter 7 titled “India and Pakistan”, Chapter 8 titled “India as an Asian Power”, and Chapter 9 titled “India and the United States”.

<sup>64</sup> Chandragupta had established the Mauryan Empire in 321 B.C. after defeating the Nandas of Magadha with the help of Kautilya.

<sup>65</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 497.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

compromise or mutual understanding”.<sup>67</sup> While never questioning the primacy of politics in warfare, Kautilya viewed diplomacy and foreign policy as instruments of war. Kautilya wanted to win wars at all costs while keeping the casualties low on both the sides. He believed that the strongest weapon of war was the intellect/cunning of the strategist. “Diplomacy [and foreign policy] is really a subtle act of war, a series of actions taken to weaken an enemy and gain advantages for oneself, all with an eye toward eventual [subjugation or] conquest”.<sup>68</sup> Kautilya was a strong advocate of statesmanship that “instead of crushing an enemy would win him over”.<sup>69</sup>

According to Kautilya, the conquest of the *chakravarti-kshetram* (or the Indian subcontinent) was “not primarily a matter of military action”, but an expansion of the sovereignty or the dominion of the ruler “by effecting alliances with those who ... [were] likely to be won over”.<sup>70</sup> Political alliances as well as alliances by marriage into high-status and ruling families were a part of the expansionist policy of the state.

Wars in the subcontinent had ceased to be unlimited in their political or military objectives by the time the Mauryas came to power. “By the time of the Arthashastra . . . wars ceased to be total, ending short of one or the other side being eliminated, as long as the losing king or a new one installed in his place accepted the winning one as his suzerain, agreed to pay a tribute and as a satellite, acquiesced in furthering the interests of the victor he now owed his life and loyalty to”.<sup>71</sup> For Kautilya, “exterminating” the enemy, meant killing the rival leaders only. The rivals’ subjects and soldiers were always spared and treated well. He said that massacring the vanquished would spread fear in all the neighboring kingdoms who may then resist the victor in the future with a greater show of strength. Moreover, the vanquished soldiers were to be spared because they could always be recruited in the service of the victor, whereas the subjects (peasants) were spared because they were engaged in revenue producing professions like agriculture. Again, it was prudent and in the ruler’s interests to act

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<sup>67</sup> Adda B Bozeman, *Politics and Culture in International History: From the Ancient Near East to the Opening of the Modern Age* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), p. 496.

<sup>68</sup> Roger Boesche, “Kautilya’s Arthashastra on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India”, *The Journal of Military History* 67 (January 2003), pp. 19-20.

<sup>69</sup> Bozeman, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>70</sup> André Wink, “Sovereignty and Universal Dominion in South Asia”, in *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia 1000-1800*, edited by Jos J L Gommans and Dirk H A Kolff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 104-5.

<sup>71</sup> Bharat Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security – The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 2002), p. 11.

righteously. Not surprisingly, Kautilya advocated the covert killing of dissenting leaders (and other ‘troublemakers’) in the vanquished kingdom.

Kautilya sanctioned humanitarian acts that also coincided with the ruler’s self interest.<sup>72</sup> According to the very realist Kautilya, it was wiser to fight wars with unjust kings without public support than to fight against a righteous king who had the complete support of his people.<sup>73</sup> Kautilya’s morality was very realist and in the king’s self interest. Kautilya was also a strong advocate of a domestic policy of social justice. In his opinion, social justice was the best defense policy for a king in the long run. He also advised the king to treat his conquered subjects humanely, as this would help to consolidate his empire. Hence, there was a strong moral streak in Mauryan warfare. After all it was the king’s *dharma* (i.e., honorable duty or the right code of conduct) to mete out justice and ensure law and order in his kingdom and empire. Basham calls this “humanitarian imperialism”,<sup>74</sup> while Eraly calls this “enlightened self-interest”.<sup>75</sup>

Ashoka’s<sup>76</sup> pacifism after the bloody annexation of Kalinga (as he rhetorically endorsed non-violence and renounced conquest by military in favor of conquest by *dhamma*<sup>77</sup>) was realist, but under the guise of morality. Many sources cite that as many as 100,000 were slain and 150,000 were deported after the Kalinga War (though these figures are very likely exaggerated).<sup>78</sup> Ashoka resorted to exaggeration in an effort to glorify himself and to discourage others from taking up arms against him. Having heard of the Kalinga War, the kingdoms of the south gave Ashoka pledges of friendship and remained at peace.<sup>79</sup> According to Keay, even after Kalinga, Ashoka neither abjured warfare nor did he disband units of the Mauryan army.<sup>80</sup> In spite of his pacifist pronouncements, he never repatriated the Kalingans who were deported after the war. “It was easy for Ashoka to give up conquest

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<sup>72</sup> Boesche, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> A L Basham, “Some Fundamentals of Hindu Statecraft”, in *Comparative World Politics: Readings in Western and Premodern Non-Western International Relations*, edited by Joel Larus (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1966), p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 428.

<sup>76</sup> Ashoka was the grandson of Chandragupta and the greatest of all ancient Indian emperors.

<sup>77</sup> Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word *dharma*.

<sup>78</sup> The Mauryans traditionally believed in sparing the lives of their opponents’ armies in the hope of integrating them into their own. The Kalingans who were an independent-minded people must have put up a fierce opposition to the invading Mauryans. It is possible that it was this very fierce resistance put up by the Kalingans that led the Mauryans to slay them ruthlessly.

<sup>79</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 184.

<sup>80</sup> John Keay, *India: A History* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), pp. 91-4.

after Kalinga, for there was no more worthy territory in India left for him to conquer . . . For all his idealism, Ashoka was a realist”.<sup>81</sup> Ashoka wanted his descendants to use force only when absolutely necessary and even then he wanted them to be humane and show mercy.

### Gupta Empire

Like the Mauryas before them, the “Guptas had made war a civilizing force and . . . fought to conquer nomads and forest people who became the ‘wild tribes’ outside the world of *dharma* . . . Medieval dynasties had a basic commitment to the expansion of permanent field cultivation, which required constant fighting on the frontiers of farming”.<sup>82</sup> Analogous to their Mauryan predecessors, the Gupta generals announced the arrival of good governance wherever they conquered.

Interestingly, the Arthashastra was not completed until the Gupta age, and as such constitutes one of the many links between the two ancient Indian empires.<sup>83</sup> It is likely that the Guptas also practiced many of the principles of war, diplomacy and foreign policy as prescribed by the Arthashastra and practiced by the Mauryans.

A play written in the sixth century about the accession of Chandra Gupta II<sup>84</sup> describes how he dressed up as Queen Dhruvadevi, the wife of Ramagupta, to gain access to the Shaka (Indo-Scythian) king’s apartments and then killed him. According to this play, Ramagupta, Samudragupta’s successor, was defeated in a battle by the Shakas to whom he agreed to surrender his wife. Ramagupta’s younger brother, Chandra Gupta (II), killed the Shaka king to avenge the Gupta defeat and the humiliation of surrendering the Gupta Queen. He then became the emperor after killing Ramagupta and marrying Dhruvadevi. According to Thapar, the discovery of coins of Ramagupta and of inscriptions mentioning Dhruvadevi as Chandra Gupta II’s wife, lends some credibility to this story.<sup>85</sup> The important point to note is that even if this story is not entirely correct, the glorification of a tale in a play where the emperor kills a rival without a contest in the field depicts a society where treachery and deceit were accepted forms of warfare, similar to the overt use of military might in a battle.

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<sup>81</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 397, 407.

<sup>82</sup> Ludden, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>83</sup> Ludden, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> The Gupta Chandra Gupta is phonetically separated to avoid confusion with Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan Empire.

<sup>85</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 285.

In Gupta warfare, “‘Uprooted’ kings were reinstated, their territories restored, and the Gupta forces withdrawn. ... It was more expedient to content themselves with the rich pickings of conquest and to retain the option of perhaps repeating this feat when more such pickings had accumulated. ... Precedence and paramountcy were what mattered”.<sup>86</sup> According to Thapar, “The emphasis [of Gupta warfare] seems to be on the paying of tribute rather than annexing of territory”.<sup>87</sup> Hence, the total destruction of the enemy was never attempted; their submission (and at times absorption) was what mattered to the Guptas.

Being of the low vaishya caste, Chandra Gupta I married into the Lichchhavi family, an old and established family of Northeast India. Marriage into the Lichchhavi family made Chandra Gupta I a member of a distinguished family as well as increased the size of his territory as Lichchhavi territories were added to the Gupta lands. “Chandra Gupta I’s successor would style himself not ‘son of a Gupta father’ but ‘son of a Lichchhavi daughter’”.<sup>88</sup> A “marriage alliance” was always the most secure form of gaining new territory in ancient India. Under Chandra Gupta II, the Gupta influence spread to the Deccan when Prabhavati, his daughter by a princess of the Naga dynasty, married into the Vakataka dynasty (to Rudrasena II) which was the dominant power in the Deccan. Rudrasena died soon after marriage and Prabhavati ruled the Vakataka state as an associate of the Guptas and in accordance with Gupta policy.

Since the time of Ashoka, Buddhism had become the main religion of India. However, the rise of the Guptas was preceded by a Brahmnical renaissance. The Guptas tried to assert their moral superiority by patronizing Brahmnical Hinduism, i.e., by asserting the primacy of the Vedas. They gave “a new impetus to the Aryanising primacy of both the brahmans and their language [Sanskrit]”.<sup>89</sup> Keay adds that the Guptas identified with Brahmnical gods and goddesses as doing so conferred prestige upon them.<sup>90</sup> This gave the Guptas the moral authority to culturally ‘Aryanise’ the non-Aryans of the subcontinent by conquering them.

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<sup>86</sup> Keay, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

<sup>87</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 283.

<sup>88</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>89</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 132-3.

<sup>90</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 147-8.



One prominent example of Aryanisation under the Guptas is the Bengal region of the subcontinent.<sup>91</sup>

### Mughal Empire

For the Mughal Empire, territorial aggrandisement was the only way to support a vast bureaucracy. The cost of maintaining a highly centralised administration, as well as the Mughal nobility (including warrior-nobles – *amirs* or *mansabdars*), and the imperial army meant that, “the empire needed to expand to survive”. The empire was necessarily outward looking and non-status quoist (within the Indian subcontinent) for its survival. Mughal policy of conquest and territorial expansion (similar to that of the Mauryas and the Guptas) was a classic realist strategy of power maximisation.

Expansion of the empire was not purely a military task. Many Rajput chiefs offered their daughters in a “marriage alliance” to Akbar and agreed to Mughal domination over their lands in Rajasthan. Jahangir, Akbar’s successor, was his son from his Rajput wife, a Jaipur princess called Jodha Bai. Many others publicly acknowledged Mughal supremacy, adopted Mughal culture and learnt Persian, which was the lingua franca of Mughal India. In return they were allowed to retain their Hindu religious beliefs and their Hindu warrior-caste status and “the emperor conferred the ancestral lands (*watan*) of the raja as his non-transferable holding. These lands were not subject to tribute but their estimated revenues were applied to the pay expected for imperial service”.<sup>92</sup>

Chitor and Ranthambor were both won after long sieges. The prolonged nature of these sieges made negotiations “a regular part of siegecraft”.<sup>93</sup> The inherent difficulties in maintaining a long siege made political concessions an attractive strategy for the Mughals. Since securing the revenues of their conquered territory was their chief aim, the Mughals relied heavily on skillful negotiations and diplomacy. Pre-war diplomacy, negotiations during the conduct of war, alliances, threats, bribery and fomenting dissent within enemy ranks were always the preferred strategies, while the overt use of force was always the last option. For example, in 1591, Akbar sent embassies to the Muslim sultanates in the Deccan

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<sup>91</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>92</sup> John F Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> Douglas Streusand, “The Process of Expansion”, in *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia 1000-1800*, p. 350.

to get them to submit under Mughal suzerainty. To the great advantage of the Hindu landed gentry or *zamindars* in the Deccan, the Mughals intervened in the internal affairs of the Deccan Sultanates and created local alliances and engaged in local conflicts in these states.<sup>94</sup> Only when the formal demand to submit to the Mughals was rejected, did Akbar lead a large army to the Deccan and incorporated Berar into the Mughal Empire in 1596, and Khandesh and parts of Ahmednagar in 1599.

To ensure their overlordship over local princes especially in western and southern India, the Mughals relied upon the *harkara* system of intelligence to effectively govern their vast empire. Under this system, regular reports were supplied by scholars of the upper Hindu castes as well as by ‘runners’, who carried verbal and/or written messages and reports over long distances at high speed. This intelligence network was essential for Mughal supremacy in India.<sup>95</sup>

It was under Emperor Aurangzeb that the Mughals accomplished the final conquest of the Deccan. In 1685 Bijapur was annexed and most of the leading Muslim nobles of Bijapur were assimilated into the Mughal nobility. This was followed by the annexation of Golconda in 1687 after the Indo-Persian noble Mir Mohammed Ibrahim, who was commanding Golconda’s defenses for Sultan Qutb Shah, defected to the Mughals. The Mughals also absorbed the armies of Bijapur and Golconda. Finally in 1689, even the Marathas were conquered and subdued by Aurangzeb.<sup>96</sup> However, the Marathas soon re-asserted their power and challenged the Mughal authority in Deccan and then even in Delhi. The Mughals and the Marathas fought several battles in the Deccan, many of which resulted in negotiations between the two in which the Marathas accepted Mughal suzerainty. When Maratha ambitions grew outside the Deccan after Shivaji ransacked Surat in 1664, Emperor Aurangzeb sent a large Mughal army under Jai Singh to neutralize Shivaji. After Shivaji was cornered, the Mughals demanded his submission under the Treaty of Purandhar.<sup>97</sup> The Mughals never destroyed the Maratha army decisively nor did they kill Shivaji. At other times, the two clashing armies resorted to tactics that avoided direct force-on-force application like attempting to sever the other party’s supply line (the Marathas tried to cut the

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<sup>94</sup> Wink, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>95</sup> John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2003), pp. 16-17. The British eventually adopted and modified the *harkara* system to run their Indian empire.

<sup>96</sup> Richards, op. cit., pp. 220-4.

<sup>97</sup> Keay, op. cit., 353.

Mughal supply line in the 1690s during the siege of Jinji<sup>98</sup>); by trying to create dissent through bribery (Aurangzeb captured several Maratha forts between 1700-05 through bribery to persuade the Maratha commanders to surrender<sup>99</sup>); and took advantage of dissatisfied nobles in the other side's political or military leadership (in 1719 the Marathas under Peshwa Balaji marched towards Delhi together with a renegade Mughal army headed by Saiyid Husain Ali Khan who had serious differences with the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar.<sup>100</sup>

The Mughals were also kind to the peasants and merchants in the territories of the vanquished as they relied on agricultural and trade revenues to support their armies and the Mughal nobility. For similar reasons the Mughals never slaughtered their rival armies if they willingly submitted, as the vanquished soldiers could always be used to serve the Mughal Empire. "Generally speaking, Mughal policy was usually aimed not at destroying but at incorporating the enemy, preferably by means of endless rounds of negotiations".<sup>101</sup>

The absorptive power of Indian culture (including Hinduism) was so strong that the Indo-Islamic rulers had to resort to Islam and Islamic religious leaders and institutions for legitimacy, political backing and expansion during the early days of the empire. However, soon after consolidating power, Akbar "began to assert . . . divinely illumined light to rule lesser human beings".<sup>102</sup> Akbar started a new syncretic creed centered around him, *Din Ilahi*, which was a result of his intellectual quest to determine the truth as well as a clever political strategy to bind his nobles to him, the emperor. His nobles never had to give up their own faiths to subscribe to *Din Ilahi*, for it was meant as a point of convergence for the various religious beliefs present in his empire for the sake of *suhl-i-kuhl* (universal peace).<sup>103</sup> In India, sultans took various titles that indicated their ethnic and cultural leanings.

In the Qur'an, this Arabic word [sultan] connotes a man with spiritual power. . . . Mughal emperors . . . adopted Persian imperial culture and took the title of *Padshah* to lift themselves symbolically above Turks, Afghans and all other sultans. . . . a sultan was a man of personal greatness, not only as an army commander but also as a spiritual and moral being. A man of civilization, his wars were civilizing, by definition, though what this meant varied and changed.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Richards, op. cit., pp. 229-232.

<sup>99</sup> Richards, op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>100</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>101</sup> Gommans, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>102</sup> Richards., p. 45.

<sup>103</sup> Jahangir retained some of the details of Akbar's new faith for purely realpolitik reasons, like the glorification of the monarch, but discarded the new faith as a whole.

<sup>104</sup> Ludden, op. cit., pp. 77-8.

However, the Mughals were imperialists on the question of territorial-aggrandizement.<sup>105</sup>

### Republic of India

Treaties/alliances, diplomacy and intelligence have played a crucial role in Indian strategic affairs. India has always aspired to strategically dominate its neighbors in South Asia, as opposed to militarily conquering them. This is aptly demonstrated in its relations with its small South Asian neighbors – Nepal and Bhutan. The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between India and Nepal, which was a result of China’s increasing influence in Tibet as well as a continuation of the relationship between British India and Nepal. This treaty curbed Nepal’s strategic autonomy and made India in-charge of Nepal’s foreign and security policy. “India thereby renounced the annexation of Nepal, but this was paired by “friendship” between the two countries.”<sup>106</sup> Landlocked Nepal is dependent on India for almost all of its imports and exports.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Bhutan is a protectorate of India under the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of Friendship signed in 1949. This was also a continuation of the policy of British India toward Bhutan and it was primarily motivated by China’s activities in Tibet.<sup>108</sup> Soviet backing through the 1971 Treaty of Peace and Friendship was essential for New Delhi in the 1971 Bangladesh War.<sup>109</sup> These security treaties – a form of power maximisation through external balancing – are clear indicators of realist policies.

India has always viewed good intelligence as an effective instrument of national power and as a force multiplier. India’s foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), has always paid considerable attention to China and Pakistan. In the 1960s, RAW established a communications base in the Indian state of Orissa to establish radio contact with Tibetan insurgent forces and RAW pilots even dropped arms and other supplies to insurgents inside Tibet.<sup>110</sup> In the past, RAW has supported various dissenting movements in the

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<sup>105</sup> Percival Spear, *A History of India: Volume Two* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 30.

<sup>106</sup> John W Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 140.

<sup>107</sup> For an overview of India’s domination of Nepal, see Cohen, op. cit., p. 233-5, and Garver, op. cit., pp. 138-166.

<sup>108</sup> For an overview of India’s domination of Bhutan, see Garver, op. cit., pp. 175-186.

<sup>109</sup> This treaty was a political alliance (not a military alliance) between the two countries. The Soviet Union and India agreed to support one another’s foreign and security policy objectives after this treaty was signed. The Soviet Union looked to India as a counterbalance to China, and the Indians turned to the Soviets for military technology and support at the United Nations Security Council.

<sup>110</sup> Garver, op. cit., pp. 62-3.

Pakistani provinces of Sindh, Punjab, Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Elsewhere in South Asia, RAW has supported secular forces and the Hindu minority in Bangladesh. RAW was also instrumental in supporting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka in the 1980s with as many as 30 clandestine training bases in India.<sup>111</sup>

Just like the pan-Indian powers preceding it, modern India considers diplomacy to be a quasi-military instrument. After the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, India has established an unusually large diplomatic presence there. Apart from its embassy in Kabul, India has consulates in Herat, Mazhar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Jalalabad. Pakistan has expressed its anxiety about a large Indian presence in Afghanistan by calling it inimical to Pakistan's interests. Pakistan accuses RAW of carrying out anti-Pakistan acts through their presence in Afghanistan under diplomatic cover.<sup>112</sup> India has also a very large diplomatic presence in Iran. Apart from its Embassy in Tehran, India has consulates in Zahedan (at Iranian border close to both Pakistan and Afghanistan) and Bandar Abbas. Pakistan accuses India of monitoring ship movements in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz from its consulate in Bandar Abbas.<sup>113</sup>

India's success in the East in the 1971 Bangladesh War, did not translate into an escalation of the war in the West, i.e., India dismembered Pakistan, but did not decisively defeat it politically nor did it decisively destroy Pakistan's military.<sup>114</sup> This was partly due to structural reasons, namely fears regarding an escalation of war due to a possible Chinese or American intervention in the event of an Indian attack on West Pakistan, as well as concerns about a possible Russian intervention on the Indian side in its retaliation. But in part, it was also due to the fact that India thought that it could better manage the affairs in South Asia now that Pakistan was weakened and dismembered. In New Delhi's opinion, India had proven its primacy in South Asia. This confidence was reflected in the peace accords signed

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<sup>111</sup> Federation of American Scientists. *Research and Analysis Wing [RAW]*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/india/raw/> [2004, August 25].

<sup>112</sup> Samuel C Rajiv. (2004). *Indian Presence in Afghanistan*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.ipcs.org/ipcs/countryIndex2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1271&country=1012&status=article&mod=b> [2004, August 25].

<sup>113</sup> Donald L Berlin. (2004). *India-Iran Relations: A Deepening Entente*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/SAS/AsiaBilateralRelations/India-Iran%20Relations%20Berlin.pdf> [2004, August 25], p.3-4.

<sup>114</sup> John H Gill, *An Atlas of the 1971 India – Pakistan War: The Creation of Bangladesh* (Washington, DC: NESACenter, National Defense University, 2003), p. 66.

after the war in Simla, India, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi.<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, India (or for that matter even Pakistan) has never used air power to bomb cities during any of the India-Pakistan wars.<sup>116</sup>

A fundamental characteristic of India's security behavior has been the justification of its realist policies by high-sounding moral pronouncements. It is widely believed that India is a pacifist country as evidenced by Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of *ahimsa* (or non-violence) and its value-laden foreign policy. However, Karnad rightly points out, "the Mahatma used morality as [a] political instrument, which is not the same thing as propagating morality for its own sake and, even less, as acting morally".<sup>117</sup> Basham also notes that it was only Mahatma Gandhi who interpreted the doctrine of non-violence as eschewing war. This was however not the case in ancient and medieval India.<sup>118</sup> India's goals or 'ends' were dictated by pragmatic realism, however, India was constrained by its 'means'. As a result of its poverty, low level of economic development, and inferior military capabilities vis-à-vis the British, India adopted morality as a tool of realpolitik to serve its national interests.

Nehru's policy of non-alignment served India's national interests well by allowing it to avoid entangling military alliances, and at the same time seeking benefits from both the superpowers, as India was economically and militarily too weak to do anything else then. In India's opinion, the policy of non-alignment projected her in a moral light. India perceived herself as a new force in international politics urging the developed world to avoid military confrontation and to aid the process of development in former colonies.<sup>119</sup> India's dismemberment of its South Asian rival Pakistan in the 1971 Bangladesh War also preceded with a moral justification. India's moral justification for taking military action against the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was a civil war between the two-halves of Pakistan that resulted in widespread abuses of human rights by the Punjabi-dominated West Pakistanis in the Bengali East Pakistan. But India had strong strategic reasons for intervening in the East.

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<sup>115</sup> This was a symbolic as well as a strategic gesture. The India-Pakistan peace accord after their 1965 war was signed in Tashkent under the leadership of the Soviet Union. By signing the peace accord at the end of the 1971 war in India, the message that India was sending to the world was that India was in-charge of all regional strategic affairs in South Asia. See Cohen, op. cit., pp. 217-9.

<sup>116</sup> W P S Sidhu and Chris Smith, *Indian Defence and Security – Industry, Forces and Future Trends* (Coulson, Surrey: Jane's Special Report, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>117</sup> Karnad, op. cit., p. xxii.

<sup>118</sup> Basham, "Some Fundamentals of Hindu Statecraft", p. 48.

<sup>119</sup> See "Non-alignment as Bargaining Chip" in Karnad, op. cit., pp. 89-94, and Chapter 2, "Beyond Non-alignment", in C Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003). Also see "Nehru's Grand Strategy for a Major-Power Role, 1947-1964," in Nayar and Paul, op. cit.

Dismemberment of Pakistan ended the notion of the “two-nation theory”<sup>120</sup> that led to the partition of British India. The civil war in Pakistan had also led to an inflow of approximately 10 million refugees from the East into India. This was causing enormous social and financial strain on New Delhi and was threatening to reignite the insurgency by leftist Bengali radicals in Eastern India.<sup>121</sup> India took offensive action in Bangladesh under the moral banner of liberation of the Bangladeshi people and the defense of India.

In another instance, India morally justified its 1974 nuclear test by calling it a “peaceful nuclear explosion”. In reality it was in response to the Chinese nuclear program. China had become a nuclear power in 1964.<sup>122</sup> India conducted its second series of underground nuclear tests after the end of the Cold War in May 1998. India’s security environment had considerably degraded since the implosion of the Soviet Union, with the rise of China and with China’s transfer of nuclear technology, weapons design and delivery systems to Pakistan. It was against this backdrop that India conducted its 1998 nuclear tests. However, India’s moral justification this time around was that India was “against nuclear apartheid”, i.e., against the nuclear monopoly of the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council. Immediately after its tests, India expressed its views and long-term intentions of global nuclear disarmament.<sup>123</sup>

### 5.3.2 *What is the given state’s strategic orientation?*

#### Mauryan Empire

Kautilya was very aware that all that prevailed was the Hobbesian law of the jungle, or *matsya-nyaya* (i.e., the ‘law of the fish’). Kautilya, while describing the maintenance of order said, “[T]hose who seek to maintain order shall always hold ready the threat of punishment. ... Unprotected, the small fish will be swallowed up by the big fish”.<sup>124</sup> The Arthashastra advocates maximisation of power and the single-minded pursuit of national interests. Kautilya also assumed that every other state would be motivated by these factors.

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<sup>120</sup> According to this theory, the Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent comprised two separate nations, hence the partition of British India was inevitable. However, the creation of Bangladesh led to the emergence of two Muslim states in the subcontinent – Pakistan and Bangladesh.

<sup>121</sup> Gill, *An Atlas of the 1971 India – Pakistan War*, op. cit.

<sup>122</sup> For a detailed account of the politics behind the 1974 nuclear test see Karnad, op. cit., pp. 283-338.

<sup>123</sup> Jaswant Singh, “Against Nuclear Apartheid”, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1998.

<sup>124</sup> L N Rangarajan, ed., *Kautilya: The Arthashastra* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1992), p. 108.

Kautilya is famous for his Mandala Theory of international relations where he labeled the immediate neighbors as “natural” enemies, and any state on the other side of the neighboring state as a “natural” ally. Kautilya believed that the enemy’s enemy was a friend. The Mandala theory has been labeled as “the cult of expansion” as it necessarily disturbed the status quo of international politics.<sup>125</sup>

From the point of view of the Mauryans, expansion – an offensive action – was a defensive response. The only way to survive in the subcontinent during the Mauryan period was by exploiting and annexing the neighbors and their divisions. Moreover, expansion brought with it additional agricultural revenue for the Empire, secured access to land and sea trade routes, and also brought in more military recruits for further expansion.

The most important subcontinental war during this period was the Kalinga<sup>126</sup> War fought under Emperor Ashoka. Immediately after consolidating his hold over Magadha, Chandragupta began the process of imperial expansion by subduing or annexing the various *mahajanpadas* or oligarchic republics as well as other kingdoms in the subcontinent. By the time of Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire stretched from the Hindu Kush Mountains (in present day Afghanistan) to the Pennar River in the south, and stretched from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. Only Kalinga defied the Mauryans under Ashoka.

Kalinga was a part of the Magadhan Empire under the Nandas who had built canals to boost agriculture in that region. Ashoka’s bloody campaign against the Kalingans around 260 B.C. is a classic case of “offensive defense” within the subcontinent. At some point after the fall of the Nandas and the rise of the Mauryas, the Kalingans, who were an independent-minded people broke away from the Magadhan Empire and started interfering with Magadhan trade with the southern kingdoms. Ashoka’s campaign against them was partly a response to secure these land and sea trade routes to the south, and partly to reassert Magadhan supremacy over Kalinga and by extension in the Indian subcontinent.

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<sup>125</sup> Benoy Kumar Sarkar, “The Hindu Concept of Balance of Power: Theory of the Mandala”, in *Comparative World Politics*, p. 119.

<sup>126</sup> Roughly, the present day Orissa state of India.



The Greeks under Alexander invaded the territories of the Indian subcontinent in 327 B.C.<sup>127</sup> King Porus, who ruled a tiny kingdom in northwest India, east of the river Jhelum, was the only king who accepted Alexander's challenge and fought him bravely although he lost to Alexander. After Porus was wounded on the battlefield, Alexander sent a messenger named *Meroes* (who some scholars think was Chandragupta *Maurya*) promising good treatment. After being asked how he wished to be treated, Porus proudly replied, "As befits a king". So impressed was Alexander with the bravery and courage displayed by Porus that he restored his kingdom and probably added more territory to it. In doing so, Alexander effectively made an ally out of Porus.<sup>128</sup> Alexander had heard of the Magadhan kingdom under the Nandas and their large army and desired to advance further. However, after years of fighting continuously and the tough battle with Porus, Alexander's soldiers did not share his grand vision and so the Greeks retreated.

The first venture into the subcontinent after the birth of the first pan-Indian power, the Mauryas, was that of the Greeks under Seleucus Nicator in 305 B.C. This resulted in an understanding between the Greeks and the Mauryans that led Seleucus to give up all ambition east of the Kabul Valley. Seleucus, who had become the master of the vast Asian provinces of Alexander's Empire after his death, made no subsequent attempt to regain Alexander's territories in Northwest India. The historical evidence on the nature of the collision between Seleucus and the Mauryans under Chandragupta is disputed (i.e., it is not certain if a war was fought or if a political accommodation was reached). However, the two sides parted on good terms and contracted a "marriage relationship".<sup>129</sup> In the ensuing period, diplomacy became the cornerstone of a cordial relationship between Mauryan India and Greece.<sup>130</sup>

India did "learn", though not consciously from its Greek invaders. Hellenism was a strong cultural factor (together with Persian influences) in northwestern India. Bactrian Greeks expanded into northwest India after the decline of the Mauryan Empire and established Indo-

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<sup>127</sup> The empire of the Achaemenid Iranians stretched all the way up to the river Indus, which was annexed in 518 B.C., and Persian hegemony stretched all the way up to the river Jhelum (in the Punjab region of modern day South Asia).

<sup>128</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, pp. 353-4, 360.

<sup>129</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, pp. 377-9. Eraly says that "Seleucus had come a long way with his army to regain his Indian territories, and he would not have turned back, or ceded extensive new territories to Chandragupta, without a trial of strength. The contest was in all probability won by Chandragupta. ... And since it is usually the loser who gives a daughter in marriage to the victor, it is likely that Chandragupta or Bindusara [Chandragupta's son] took a Seleucid princess as a bride."

<sup>130</sup> Bozeman, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

Greek kingdoms there that lasted for a few centuries. But as has always been the case with India's invaders, the Greeks were culturally, religiously and genetically assimilated into the Indic fold.<sup>131</sup> The familiarity with other peoples after the Greek campaign also meant that large numbers of Indians were now traveling to foreign countries, in part due to the opening up of trade.<sup>132</sup> "More immediately, the political upheaval that Alexander wrought in north-western India facilitated the establishment of the Mauryan Empire."<sup>133</sup> It is also possible that Chandragupta's dream of creating an empire in the Indian subcontinent was influenced by the vast empire created by Alexander based on military supremacy.<sup>134</sup> Chandragupta is also believed to have sought an alliance with Alexander to invade Magadha in order to remove the Nandas from the Magadhan throne. However, the Greeks were weary after fighting wars for eight continuous years had retreated.

### Gupta Empire

Under Chandra Gupta II, the offensive action started by Samudragupta against the Shaka Western satraps in Malwa and Gujarat continued. Chandra Gupta II managed to defeat the Shaka rulers temporarily in 388 A.D.<sup>135</sup> From the perspective of the Guptas, this was a defensive action as the Shakas were contesting the supremacy of the Guptas in north and west India. Moreover, success against the Shakas gave the Guptas access to the profits of the international maritime trade of the rich port cities of Gujarat, which was essential for the growing Gupta Empire.<sup>136</sup> The Guptas pursued a realist strategy of territorial expansion based on alliances and conquests.

During Kumaragupta's reign (415 A.D. – 455 A.D.), when the empire faced an uprising in Malwa by Pushyamitra, Skandagupta (Kumaragupta's son) led a successful military action against Pushyamitra. The Guptas never hesitated to use force within their territories or elsewhere in South Asia. The Guptas never ventured outside South Asia. "In the west no corroborative evidence of Gupta intervention beyond the Indus, let alone the Hindu Kush is

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<sup>131</sup> Bozeman, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>132</sup> The first recorded instance of Indian soldiers fighting outside the subcontinent is that of Indian soldiers from the Achaemenid Empire's Indian territories fighting the Greeks in Europe in fifth century B.C. under Xerxes I.

<sup>133</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 368.

<sup>134</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>135</sup> A L Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised ed., (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2001), p. 65

<sup>136</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 285.

available”.<sup>137</sup> Although the Guptas had thriving commercial relations with the “Indianised” kingdoms of Southeast Asia, who are all said to have acknowledged Samudragupta’s suzerainty, no naval expedition was led by the Guptas outside South Asia and no Indian colonies existed there.

The Guptas were invaded by an extra-regional power, the White Huns, who invaded the Gupta Empire from their base in Bactria in northern Afghanistan. Skandagupta did manage to temporarily repulse the Huns. The Huns led many small and large military incursions into India for close to a hundred years after that. Finally in 510 A.D., led by a formidable military leader called Toramana, the Huns overran Kashmir and Punjab, defeated the Guptas in Gwalior and thus extended their rule to Malwa.

India underwent significant changes in the wake of the Hun invasion. The Hun armies were followed by migrants from Central Asia who settled permanently in India. For example, the Gurjaras of India are believed to be the descendents of the Khazars of Central Asia.<sup>138</sup> Since the Gupta Empire was in decline as a result of internal factors as well as Hun invasions, defense was increasingly being perceived in local terms “which sometimes led to consolidation under capable protectors whose military acumen rather than concern for their royal antecedents was a deciding factor”.<sup>139</sup> “The rise of Rajput families and “Ksatriya” dynasties are associated by some scholars with tribal chiefs in these new areas”.<sup>140</sup>

## Mughal Empire

The Mughals had to subdue or defeat the Rajputs and the Indo-Afghans (in Bihar and Bengal) several times. This was clearly a case of “offensive defense” in the subcontinent as the Mughals thought it prudent to defeat/accommodate them, as they were contesting Mughal supremacy in the Indo-Gangetic plains. After a few strategic victories – the long sieges of Chitor and Ranthambor – as well political alliances by marriage and the introduction of Rajputs into Mughal nobility, Akbar managed to absorb most of Rajasthan into the Mughal

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<sup>137</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>138</sup> "India" *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service, [Online]. Available: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=46881> [2004, September 14].

<sup>139</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 287.

<sup>140</sup> "India" *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service, [Online]. Available: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=46881> [2004, September 14].

Empire. Led by Indo-Afghan rulers, Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal had to be subdued several times as they often revolted against Mughal authority during Akbar's reign.

A clever tactical system based on warhorses and the mounted archer gave the Mughals an edge over their opponents. Warhorses were very rare in the Indo-Gangetic plains and mounted archers even rarer. The Mughals entered Gujarat and Bengal in part to control the local warhorse sources as well as the land routes and the ports for the horse trade.<sup>141</sup> From a Mughal perspective, offensive action in these regions was part of a defensive mechanism, i.e., to retain the superiority of their system of warfare on the battlefield.

In 1585, Akbar moved his capital westward to Lahore in Punjab, as there was a threat to Kabul (a part of Mughal India) from the Uzbek ruler Abdullah Khan. Abdullah Khan had already annexed Badakhshan and was deliberating an invasion of Khurasan, which was then under Safavid Iran (a conflict during which Mughal India remained neutral). Only after Abdullah Khan's death in 1598 did Akbar move his capital back to Agra. The message was clear – no extra-regional power would be allowed to enter the Indian subcontinent where the Mughals ruled supreme. The reign of Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan saw aggressive and expansionist Mughal policies toward the Deccan kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda. These policies were in part a result of the growing influence of Safavid Iran in the Deccan as the sultans of these kingdoms had converted to Shiite Islam. Shah Jahan was determined to sever the links between Iran and the Deccan kingdoms.<sup>142</sup>

After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, a series of succession crisis led to the weakening of the Mughal power. The year 1719 saw three Mughal emperors and the empire started showing serious cracks. Under the weakened Mughal rulers, India was again attacked by two extra-regional powers, by Nadir Shah of Persia in 1739 and by Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan from 1748 onwards. Theoretically, Mughal power was to last until 1857 when the British (who were also an extra-regional power in the subcontinent) formally ended the Mughal Empire.

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<sup>141</sup> Streusand, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-349.

<sup>142</sup> S A A Rizvi, "India and the Medieval Islamic World", in *A Cultural History of India*, edited by A L Basham (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 462.

Mughal rule brought new military tactics and technology from Central Asia into India. Babur's contingent of musketeers at Panipat in 1526 was their first appearance in a field battle in India, and most importantly, the Lodhis, like most other Indians had not adopted firearms.<sup>143</sup> "The Mughal reliance on battlefield artillery and mounted archers transformed the tactical system of Indian warfare. ... [and this] ended the elephant-based system of warfare in India".<sup>144</sup> Turkish influence was apparent in the revenue administration adopted by the Delhi Sultans and later modified by Sher Khan Sur, the Mughals and even the British. The *mansabdari* system was a combination of Mongol, Turkish and Persian ideas modified for an Indian setting.<sup>145</sup> The Mughals recruited administrators, judges, artists and Sufi saints from Persia. As a result, under the Mughals, India became the center of Persian culture and a distinct Indo-Persian culture came into being.<sup>146</sup>

### Republic of India

For the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural and socio-economically diverse India, sovereignty brings with it several internal security problems. India's approach to managing its internal security contradictions involves reaching a political accommodation with its restive ethno-political groups by working within the secular framework of its democratic institutions. However, India has never shied away from the offensive use of force within its borders to defend its national unity whenever negotiations, concessions and political solutions failed to yield results. This has been clearly demonstrated in New Delhi's use of force in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and northeast India. Prior to these offensive military campaigns within its own territory, New Delhi had annexed the former princely state of Hyderabad after India's independence by force in 1948. India also added the state of Goa (as well as the former Portuguese colonies of Daman and Diu) into the Indian federation in 1960 through its military might.

India 'assimilated' Sikkim in 1975. India inherited the administrative control of Sikkim, which was an independent monarchy from British India. In 1974, when the India-backed assembly of Sikkim passed a resolution calling for closer ties with India and for participation in India's political and economic institutions, New Delhi responded by absorbing Sikkim as a

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<sup>143</sup> See Richards, op. cit., p. 8, and Eraly, *The Last Spring*, p. 15.

<sup>144</sup> Streusand, op. cit., pp. 340-1.

<sup>145</sup> Ludden, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>146</sup> Spear, op. cit., p. 48.

centrally ruled territory of India. Just like its treaties with Nepal and Bhutan, the Sikkim action was a response to India's China threat.<sup>147</sup> "Offensive defense" within the subcontinent has also been a norm for India as is evidenced by the 1971 Bangladesh War and by India's military interventions in Sri Lanka and Maldives in the 1980s. Later, angered by Nepal's purchase of military hardware from China, India blockaded Nepal economically to assert its regional dominance in the security affairs of the subcontinent.<sup>148</sup>

India justified all of its offensive operations in the subcontinent, whether military or political (India absorbed Sikkim politically, not militarily) as defensive measures. India has never ventured militarily outside South Asia. However, even independent India was on the strategic defensive against China, an extra-regional power, in the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict. The question of Tibet and the Indo-Tibetan boundary were the root causes of the Sino-Indian border conflict in which India suffered a humiliating defeat. After the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the 1950s and the 1959 Lhasa revolt, the Dalai Lama was given refuge by India, as India regards Buddhist Tibet as an offshoot of the Indian Civilization. The Indo-Tibetan boundary, which is a legacy of the British Raj, was unacceptable to the Chinese after the occupation of Tibet. China claims the entire Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and a strategic route connecting Tibet and Xinjiang passes through the disputed South Asian region of Kashmir. The brief border conflict was fought on India's territory and was followed by a unilateral Chinese withdrawal from the Eastern sector. The Aksai Chin region of Kashmir in the West, however, was retained under China's control. India's first Prime Minister Nehru cherished the idea of Asian harmony and believed that China was not serious about militarily confronting India. As a result, India was militarily ill prepared even when the Chinese forces were moving into Tibet.<sup>149</sup>

The Republic of India also 'learnt' from its British colonial past. India adopted its parliamentary democratic model of governance from the British. The Mughal system of warfare ended with the introduction of infantry-based armies based on the European model favoured by the colonial powers. "It was mainly during the Anglo-French confrontations of the mid-eighteenth century that Indian powers began to realise the superiority of European-

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<sup>147</sup> For an overview of India's assimilation of Sikkim, see Garver, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-3.

<sup>148</sup> For India's actions in Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal, see Devin T Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine", *Asian Survey* Vol. 31, No. 4 (April 1991): 351-363. India intervened in Sri Lanka and Maldives on invitation from the respective governments.

<sup>149</sup> For an overview of the Sino-Indian Border War, see Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 160-172.

trained and –equipped infantry in pitched battles”.<sup>150</sup> Analogous to the British Indian Army, infantry recruits of the army of the Republic of India are still selected on the basis of caste, region and religion.<sup>151</sup> The British officer corps presiding over these regiments in the British Indian Army has been replaced with Indian officers selected purely on the basis of merit. India’s military imbued with British political and military ethos, is impeccably professional and respects the civilian control of the military, as well as the primacy of politics.<sup>152</sup>

### *NAVAL TRADITION IN INDIA*

The most important lesson that India learnt from her colonial experience was the need to control the Indian Ocean Region (including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal). For mostly cultural reasons, Mughal and pre-Mughal India never held the navy in very high regard. According to Thapar, even though shipbuilding technologies existed and ships and boats were also used for transport across rivers, naval warfare was not highly developed in ancient India.<sup>153</sup> There were riverine forms of warfare in the Indus Delta, in the Ganga Delta and in Assam. Moreover, southern peninsular India and the Marathas had coastal navies. However, no distinct or dominant tradition of naval warfare existed in India.<sup>154</sup> Even the Mughals had no effective naval fighting force.<sup>155</sup> The peninsular kingdom of the Cholas in the far south in medieval India was perhaps the only powerful maritime power that the subcontinent has produced in its long history.

The Cholas led naval expeditions to Sri Lanka and the Maldives in South Asia. The Cholas also led a naval/military campaign to Southeast Asia in 1025. They were the only subcontinental rulers to have ever led a naval/military expeditionary force outside South Asia. Their overseas campaign against the kingdom of Shrivijaya in Southeast Asia involved both the army and the navy. The Cholas were engaged in a maritime trading relationship with China. When Shrivijaya threatened this trade, which passed through the Straits of Malacca, the Cholas responded with a show of strength. The chief reason for their naval

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<sup>150</sup> Gommans, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>151</sup> Cohen, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>152</sup> Major General (Retired) Dipankar Banerjee, “India: Military Professionalism of a First-World Army”, in *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, edited by Muthiah Alagappa (Hawaii: East-West Center, 2001).

<sup>153</sup> Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>154</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1984), pp. 254-6.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 257-261.

adventure in Southeast Asia was to gain control of the strategic points along the Straits of Malacca. Their campaign was successful, however no Chola/Indian colonies were established in Southeast Asia. The Cholas had no territorial ambitions outside South Asia. But they considered themselves the *chakravatigal* (equivalent to the *chakravartis*<sup>156</sup> of north India) and expanded their empire in the Deccan until they weakened in the thirteenth century.<sup>157</sup>

The European imperial powers (including the Portuguese and the British) were the only invaders into the subcontinent who came via the high seas.<sup>158</sup> Prior to the fifteenth century, maritime trade was open to all and subject only to local pressures and incentives. However, with the rise of Portuguese naval power in the Arabian Sea from the late fifteenth century onwards, i.e., after developments in navigation technologies and naval gunnery, maritime trade became subject to military control under state direction. The “Portuguese had indeed politicised the Indian Ocean”.<sup>159</sup> This was followed by the colonisation of India by the British, who also came via the high seas. This had a profound impact on modern India that aims for control of the Indian Ocean Region (from the Straits of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca, and the Arabian Sea as well as the Bay of Bengal) and its littoral through its naval might. C Raja Mohan calls this the ‘rediscovery of Lord Curzon’, after the former Viceroy of British India who described a similar role for British India in international affairs. Lord Curzon was also in favor of establishing “buffer states” around British India to protect the British Empire’s interests in the region. There is an emerging strategic consensus among the “neo-Curzonians” in India that wants New Delhi to play a more active role in the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, while realising that the United States is the dominant power in all of these regions.<sup>160</sup>

#### **5.4 What grand strategic ends does the given state seek?**

##### Mauryan Empire

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<sup>156</sup> See the portion on the Mauryas in Section 5.4 to understand the meaning of this term.

<sup>157</sup> For an overview of Chola expansion, see Thapar, *Early India*, pp. 363-9.

<sup>158</sup> All of India’s earlier invaders came from Central and West Asia through the northwestern mountain passes into the Punjab and beyond. Most were eventually absorbed by India.

<sup>159</sup> Keay, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-6.

<sup>160</sup> See Chapter 8, “Rediscovering Lord Curzon”, in C Raja Mohan, *op. cit.*, 204-236.



The “cult of expansion” of the Mandala theory was limited to the South Asian subcontinent only. The Arthashastra refers to the seeker of the conquest as *vijigishu* with the ultimate goal being the *chakravarti-kshetram*, which literally meant the entire world, but for Kautilya it referred to the Indian subcontinent.<sup>161</sup> The Mauryan Empire was not expansionist outside South Asia and never ventured militarily outside the subcontinent.

In ancient India, because of societal divisions, the only way to exist was to exploit and annex the neighbors and their divisions, for there was always a fear that the neighbor would exploit one’s own internal divisions and seek subjugation or annexation. According to Kautilya, imperial expansion was a desirable goal. As mentioned in Section 5.3, Kautilya assumed that every state would try to expand by exploiting opportunities created by these factors.

An important feature of the Mauryan administration was the existence of “kingless states”. Several Greek sources mention kingless states in India during this period that were set up as kingdoms initially but later dissolved into oligarchies and even democracies. There were many tribal regions and cities in Mauryan India that had complete control over their internal affairs. Their autonomous or semi-autonomous status might have led the Greek sources to depict them as “kingless states”.<sup>162</sup> The point to note is that the Mauryans did not demand political unity (although they did succeed in centralising large regions of their empire); they demanded the strategic unity of their empire instead.

At the height of the Mauryan power, 85% of the Indian subcontinent came under their rule.<sup>163</sup> This area included the Indo-Gangetic Plains in the north as well as the Narmada-Tapti River Valleys in northern Western Ghats. The most fertile zones of the Indian subcontinent, i.e., the centers of agricultural and pastoral production were under Mauryan control. These regions also constituted areas of the largest population densities in the subcontinent. Moreover, they also controlled all the key subcontinental trade arteries as well as those that connected the subcontinent to West and Central Asia. The area under the Mauryans also included the chief trading ports in Gujarat and Bengal. As a result, the Mauryans had the largest revenues among all the subcontinental powers as well as the largest actual and latent

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<sup>161</sup> Eraly, *Gem in the Lotus*, p. 494. Kautilya defined the *chakravarti-kshetram* as the entire Indian subcontinent, which he described as the land stretching from the Himalayas down to the seas. *Chakra* is Sanskrit for wheel and it is possible that the *vijigishu* meant someone who ruled all land where his chariots could roll without obstacles or opposition (i.e., within the Indian subcontinent). See Boesche, op. cit., 17.

<sup>162</sup> Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Maurya*, pp. 120-1.

<sup>163</sup> Schwartzberg, op. cit.

military manpower. With a population of about 50 million people, roughly 600,000 strong infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 8,000 chariots and 9,000 elephants, it is not too fanciful to speak of the Mauryans as the regional hegemon of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>164</sup> The only fertile region of the subcontinent that was not under the direct Mauryan control was the much smaller river valleys in the southern peninsula.

The Mauryas wanted their supremacy in the Indian subcontinent acknowledged. The kingdoms of south India (the Cholas, Pandyas, Satiyaputras and the Keralaputras) clearly regarded Ashoka as their nominal suzerain, although they were not a part of the Mauryan Empire. Although the *Rajatarangini*<sup>165</sup> states that Ashoka built Srinagara, it is not certain if Kashmir was actually a part of the Mauryan Empire. Even if it was not officially a part of the Mauryan Empire, Kashmir was in the Mauryan sphere of influence.<sup>166</sup> The Greek settlements to the northwest of India were also within the Mauryan sphere of influence. This sphere of influence also encompassed *Para Samudra* (or Sri Lanka).<sup>167</sup>

### Gupta Empire

The second and the third Gupta Emperors – Samudragupta, and Chandra Gupta II – acquired most of the territories of the Gupta Empire. Samudragupta's conquests were listed on the same pillar in Allahabad on which Ashoka had inscribed almost six centuries earlier.<sup>168</sup> Keay wonders if Samudragupta was aspiring to Mauryan hegemony.<sup>169</sup> The names of the places he conquered (as inscribed on the pillar) include places in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Gandhara, Kanchipuram (near Madras), Assam, Nepal, Gujarat and Sri Lanka. It is not certain if Samudragupta actually conquered all these regions. The Guptas brought most of north India and parts of the Deccan under their direct control. Other major subcontinental kingdoms acknowledged Gupta suzerainty and paid tribute. Samudragupta clearly had the ambition to rule supreme in South Asia. According to Ingalls, "if we pinpoint the identifiable names on the map, we get a very near complete circle of the

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<sup>164</sup> Boesche, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>165</sup> *Rajatarangini* is the twelfth century history of Kashmir, written in Sanskrit by the historian Kalhana.

<sup>166</sup> Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp. 130-1.

<sup>167</sup> Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp. 130 and 134-6.

<sup>168</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Mughal Emperor Jahangir inscribed his own conquests on the same pillar.

<sup>169</sup> Keay, op. cit., 136.

Indian subcontinent. ... it is not too fanciful to speak of Samudragupta as a *cakravartin* as the term had been understood from time immemorial".<sup>170</sup>

It also seems that the criteria associated with the status of *cakravartin* did not include sustained government or direct control. In the case of distant rulers a nominal submission seems to have been sufficient ... a world-ruler did not actually have to rule the world; it was enough that the world should acknowledge him as such.<sup>171</sup>

The Guptas succeeded in strategically uniting the subcontinent. The Guptas managed to bring 70% of the Indian subcontinent under their control.<sup>172</sup> Just like their Mauryan predecessors, their territories included the Indo-Gangetic plains as well as river valleys in northern Western Ghats. They also controlled the key strategic subcontinental trade arteries as well as those connecting the subcontinent to West and Central Asia. The Guptas also controlled the important trading ports in Gujarat and Bengal. As a result, they were the wealthiest of all the subcontinental states, and had the largest actual and latent military manpower. It is estimated that the Gupta military force was almost as large as that of the Mauryas.<sup>173</sup> The Guptas aspired to and achieved regional hegemony in Indian subcontinent.

For the Guptas, the internal dimension of sovereignty was perhaps more salient than the Mauryas because it was essentially structured on a feudatory arrangement and lacked a bureaucratic structure.<sup>174</sup> In many regions, vanquished kings were reinstated after exacting a one-off tribute. There was always the threat that these regional centers would acquire independence from Gupta suzerainty. This necessitated repeated military action and forced the Guptas to look inside as well outside the territory under their direct control to maintain their autonomy. For example, Samudra-Gupta started an offensive action in Malwa in West-Central India, which was finally annexed by his successor Chandra Gupta II. Malwa saw an uprising in the reign of Chandra Gupta II's successor Kumaragupta under Pushyamitra. This uprising, which took place sometime between 415 A.D. and 455 A.D., marked the decline of

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<sup>170</sup> Daniel H H Ingalls, "Kalidasa and the Attitudes of the Golden Age", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (Jan. – Mar. 1976), p. 16.

<sup>171</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>172</sup> Schwartzberg, op. cit.

<sup>173</sup> For a rough estimate of ancient and early medieval Indian army sizes, see Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>174</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 139.

the Gupta Empire.<sup>175</sup> Kumaragupta's successor Skandagupta also faced similar problems of internal security.<sup>176</sup>

### Mughal Empire

According to Wink, "The Sanskrit texts equated 'universal dominion' or 'world-dominion' with 'dominion over the South Asian subcontinent'. Indian Islam soon adjusted itself to the same idea".<sup>177</sup> In other words, the Mughals wanted to establish their dominion over the Indian subcontinent. According to Eraly, Akbar had no territorial ambitions outside India, whether in Central Asia<sup>178</sup> or elsewhere, as there was enough territory at "home" in India especially to the south of the Vindhyas that still remained to be conquered.<sup>179</sup> At the height of the Mughal power, more than 85% of the Indian subcontinent came under their political control.<sup>180</sup> Repeating the pattern of the Mauryas and the Guptas, all the major fertile zones, trade arteries and port cities came under Mughal control. The strength of the Mughal economy – its industrial and agricultural exports – made Mughal India the "ultimate sink" of silver and gold coins from the world over.<sup>181</sup> In the year 1595, 1,823 Mughal *mansabdars* commanded 141,053 followers serving as heavy cavalry with their own equipment and horses. Moreover, Akbar's royal troops included over 12,000 musketeers and several thousand more swordsmen and archers. Additionally, around 5,000 gentlemen troops (*ahadis*) acted as household cavalry for the emperor.<sup>182</sup> By the time of Akbar's death in 1605, the Mughal Empire had become the pre-eminent polity in the Indian subcontinent and "no single kingdom or coalition of regional kingdoms could stand against the Mughal armies".<sup>183</sup> Akbar had made Mughal India the undisputed regional hegemon of South Asia. "Akbar's ambition was to gather the diverse peoples of the subcontinent under his benevolent wings, to enable them through religious and cultural syncretism, to live in peace and

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<sup>175</sup> Keay, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>176</sup> Thapar, *Early India*, p. 286.

<sup>177</sup> Wink, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>178</sup> Akbar's grandfather Babur who laid the foundations of the Mughal Empire in 1526 was a Central Asian Turko-Mongol migrant-invader.

<sup>179</sup> Eraly, *The Last Spring*, p. 157.

<sup>180</sup> Schwartzberg, op. cit.

<sup>181</sup> Richards, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>182</sup> Richards, op. cit., p. 63, 68.

<sup>183</sup> Richards, op. cit., p. 56.

amity”.<sup>184</sup> The Mughals managed to strategically unite the subcontinent and emerged as the region’s hegemon.

In Mughal India, there was always the threat that the *mansabdars* would develop regional independent bases and defy Mughal authority, as they commanded armies of the same ethnic groups and who were tied to them through patterns of ethnic kinship. Sovereignty had an important internal dimension, as “keeping the empire together required a Mughal emperor to use his own personal power to engage in the politics of alliance-building and opposition breaking to keep his own nobility under his supreme authority”.<sup>185</sup> Akbar was also concerned with the ethnic balance of his nobility that included migrant Turks, migrant Afghans, migrant Persians, “Indian” Muslims and Rajputs. “Strategies were also devised for dividing ethnic groups by pitting leaders against one another in competitions for ranks, thus [reducing] their ability to mobilise warrior clans against imperial armies”.<sup>186</sup>

### Republic of India

After the Bangladesh War, India came up with its own version of the Monroe Doctrine. It was called the ‘Indira Doctrine’ by some analysts after the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. It was nothing short of asserting India’s primacy in South Asia. According to the Indira Doctrine, South Asian states should firstly look within the subcontinent for help with their domestic political problems. Secondly, the presence of any extra-regional power in the subcontinent and/or the Indian Ocean Region would be considered adverse to India’s security interests unless that power recognised India’s predominance.<sup>187</sup> In effect what India wanted was the strategic unity of South Asia.<sup>188</sup> This is not to say that India has achieved its goal for Pakistan still defies India in the region. Moreover, both China and the US negatively influence India’s foreign and security policies through their association with Pakistan. This is primarily a result of India’s economic weakness and by extension its limited military capability. However, India clearly aspires to emerge as the regional hegemon of South

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<sup>184</sup> Eraly, *The Last Spring*, p. 163.

<sup>185</sup> Ludden, op. cit., pp. 85-6.

<sup>186</sup> Ludden, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>187</sup> Cohen, op. cit., p. 137-8.

<sup>188</sup> Political unity of South Asia was not the goal, for this was evidenced by the fact that the Indian army left Bangladesh quickly after the creation of a stable government there after the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971.

Asia.<sup>189</sup> It desires Pakistan's submission and wants both China and the US to cease all contacts with Pakistan that hurt India's interests.

All traditional indicators of power (see Table 1) point towards India's increasing preponderance or hegemony in the region.<sup>190</sup> India, with a much larger economy spends a smaller percentage of its GDP on its annual military expenditure than Pakistan. Moreover, while India's economy seems to be stuck at an annual growth rate of approximately 6%p.a.<sup>191</sup>, the structural weakness of the Pakistani economy, its high debt servicing and high defense expenditure are further compounded with low levels of technology absorption. In contrast, it is widely believed that if India implements "second generation reforms", i.e., if it invests in infrastructure development, reforms its labor law and privatizes its loss-making public sector enterprises, its economy can attain 8-9% annual growth rates.<sup>192</sup> Furthermore, as a result of its faster economic growth, India is modernising its conventional forces qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Pakistan will find it increasingly difficult to match India's growing conventional dominance.<sup>193</sup> It can be theoretically argued that India is unlikely to emerge as a regional hegemon since both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons. However, Mearsheimer argues that in the unlikely event of nuclear superiority (and this condition is absent in the South Asian context), the nuclear balance does not determine relative power. Consequently, states in such a system will deeply care about the balance of conventional military forces (especially its land component), which in turn rests on their relative economic strengths.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Some analysts have suggested that India has emerged as the bully of South Asia. See Hagerty, op. cit. and A Z Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking and its National Security Policy", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (2001): 737-764. For a view that argues that stalemate in the regional security environment in South Asia is a result of India's self perception as a status quo state and that of its neighbors as a regional bully, see Subrata K Mitra, "The Reluctant Hegemon: India's self-perception and the South Asian Strategic Environment", *Contemporary South Asia* Vol. 12, No. 3 (September 2003): 399-417.

<sup>190</sup> The table compares only India and Pakistan as they are the most important states in the region due to their size, demography, and military/nuclear capabilities.

<sup>191</sup> Virmani, op. cit.

<sup>192</sup> For a brief comparison of Indian and Pakistani economic prospects, see Ashley Tellis, "South Asia", in *Strategic Asia 2001-02: Power and Purpose*, edited by Richard J Ellings and Aaron L Friedberg (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, October 2001), p. 231-235.

<sup>193</sup> Anthony H Cordesman. (2002). *The India-Pakistan Military Balance*, [Online]. Available: [http://www.csis.org/burke/mb/india\\_pak\\_mb.pdf](http://www.csis.org/burke/mb/india_pak_mb.pdf) [2004, December 15].

<sup>194</sup> Chapter 3 "Wealth and Power" and Chapter 4 "The Primacy of Land Power" in Mearsheimer, op. cit.

**Table 1 – Indicators of Power in India and Pakistan**

|   | <b>INDIA</b>   | <b>PAKISTAN</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Area (sq km)</b>   | 2,973,190  | 778,720   |
| <b>Population</b>   | 1,065,070,607 (2004)   | 159,196,336 (2004)  |
| <b>Labor Force</b>  | 472 million (2003)   | 43.98 million (2003)  |
| <b>GDP (PPP)</b>  | US\$ 3,033 billion (2003)  | US\$ 318 billion (2003)   |
| <b>GDP (PPP per capita)</b>                                       | US\$ 2,900 (2003)  | US\$ 2,100 (2003)   |
| <b>GDP (real growth rate)</b>                                     | 8.3% (2003)  | 5.5% (2003)   |
| <b>Military Expenditure</b>                                       | US\$ 12.394 billion (2003)<br>US\$ 64 billion (PPP, 2003)              | US\$ 3.35 billion est. (2003)<br>US\$15 billion (PPP, 2003)           |
| <b>Military Expenditure as % of GDP (Range between 1994-2002)</b> | 2.1% - 2.3%  | 4.5% - 5.3%   |
| <b>Total Armed Forces</b>   | 1,325,000 (Active)<br>535,000 (Reserves)                               | 619,000 (Active)<br>513,000 (Reserves)                                |
| <b>Army</b>   | Manpower: 1,100,000<br>Main Battle Tank: 3,898                         | Manpower: 550,000<br>Main Battle Tank: 2,461                          |
| <b>Navy</b>   | Manpower: 55,000<br>Submarines: 16<br>Principal Surface Combatants: 25 | Manpower: 24,000<br>Submarines: 11<br>Principal Surface Combatants: 7 |
| <b>Air Force</b>  | Manpower: 170,000<br>Combat Aircraft: 679<br>Armed Helicopters: 40     | Manpower: 45,000<br>Combat Aircraft: 415<br>Armed Helicopters: NIL    |
| <b>Paramilitary</b>   | 1,089,700 (Active)   | 289-294,000 est. (Active)   |

SOURCES: The figures for area, population, labor force, GDP, GDP per capita, and GDP growth rate are from – The World Factbook, [Online]. (2004). Available: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/in.html> and <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pk.html> [2004, December 15]. Figures for Military Expenditure and Military Expenditure as % of GDP are from *SIPRI Yearbook 2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 312, 353, and 359. Figures for Total Armed Forces, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Paramilitary are from *The Military Balance 2004-2005* (London: Oxford University Press for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2004), pp. 151-157.

India desires the strategic unity of South Asia for internal security reasons as well. The Kashmir problem is in part a result of the fact that Pakistan wishes to incorporate the Muslim majority region, but India, which has a Muslim population almost as large as Pakistan's entire population sees the region as symbolic of India's secular identity. The Tamil separatist problem in Sri Lanka also has strategic consequences for India with its Tamil minority in the south. Additionally, ideological groups like the Maoist rebel groups in Nepal influence their

counterparts in India. These factors blur the distinction between internal security and external security in South Asia.

Since India does not have the “basic elements – common history, religion, language, culture and ethnicity – essential to forge national unity”<sup>195</sup>, the process of creating the “Indian” identity is still an ongoing one. Since the time India became independent, insurgency in the “Mongoloid fringe” of India (i.e., northeast India) has troubled New Delhi continuously.<sup>196</sup> Likewise, the Sikhs of Punjab who had their “homeland” divided between India and Pakistan during the partition of British India became particularly agitated against New Delhi beginning in the late 1970s. This resulted in an armed insurgency that lasted till the early- to mid-1990s.<sup>197</sup> Likewise, the political integration of the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir has been particularly troublesome for India.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, India also faces the threat of revolutionary naxalite violence that springs from the socio-economic disparities facing the country.<sup>199</sup>

Immediately after independence, India was acutely aware of its backward economic and military situation in international affairs. However, India’s new leaders saw her as an important world power and wanted to chart an independent foreign policy for modern India. These leaders (including modern India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru) viewed sovereignty (or independence) as having both internal and external dimensions. After close to two centuries of colonial status, India had achieved independence after a long struggle. This independence granted India domestic sovereignty. However, the emerging Cold War that was unfolding around the world threatened to undermine the external dimension of India’s independence by forcing her to choose between the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union. It was under these circumstances that India chose to pursue a policy of non-alignment as Nehru sought an independent foreign policy or strategic autonomy for India.

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<sup>195</sup> Eraly, *Just A Legal Indian*, op. cit.

<sup>196</sup> Subir Bhaumik. (2004). *Ethnicity, Ideology and Religion: Separatist Movement in India’s Northeast*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/ReligiousRadicalism/Pages%20from%20Religious%20Radicalism%20and%20Security%20in%20South%20Asia%20ch10.pdf> [2004, September 21].

<sup>197</sup> J S Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 157-227.

<sup>198</sup> *Kashmir: The View from New Delhi*, [Online]. (2003). Available: [http://www.icg.org/library/documents/asia/069\\_kashmir\\_new\\_delhi.pdf](http://www.icg.org/library/documents/asia/069_kashmir_new_delhi.pdf) [2004, September 21].

<sup>199</sup> Ajai Sahnii. *Naxalism: The Retreat of Civil Governance*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume5/Fault5-7asahni.htm> [2004, September 21].



Similarly, India pursued nuclear weapons and exploded its first nuclear device in 1974 to safeguard her strategic autonomy. The USS Enterprise and several escort ships made their appearance in the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Bangladesh War between India and Pakistan. For the first time since its independence, India's external security was threatened from the sea by an extra-regional power – the US. There was also the latent threat that the US might intervene in the event of a domestic crisis in India. “Fending off the Americans was a political rather than a military task, although it was widely believed that Washington would be dissuaded from intervening in a region having active nuclear weapons”.<sup>200</sup>

### **5.5 The Conquest and Defense of British India**

“There was never a masterplan for the conquest of India”.<sup>201</sup> British expansion in India was implicitly predicated on the belief that as long as any hostile and well-armed subcontinental power existed, it posed an existential threat to the British Raj. As a result, within a span of roughly 90 years – from the 1757 Battle of Plassey to the 1849 Second Anglo-Sikh war – the British emerged as the ‘paramount’ subcontinental power. It is interesting to note that the British politico-military behavior absorbed and modified pre-existing subcontinental security behaviour. To begin with, the British were partly motivated by the morality of their conquest, which they ascribed to their racial and civilisational superiority over the inferior and despotic regimes in India. A part of the British intelligentsia was convinced that British rule would greatly benefit India and Britain alike.

Secondly, the British did not rule a singular and unified political state in South Asia. During British rule, around 60% of the territory of the subcontinent was under direct colonial rule. The remainder 40% territory comprising a quarter of the subcontinent's population consisted of over 600 princely states that were tied to the British through an ingenious system of intricate alliances that made the British in charge of their foreign affairs and defence policy. The British not only emerged as the regional hegemon and but were also able to effect the strategic unity of the subcontinent.

Thirdly, warfare was as much political as military since the British annexed many regions of the subcontinent through diplomacy, for example, through a system of ‘subsidiary alliance’,

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<sup>200</sup> Cohen, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>201</sup> James, op. cit. p. 63.

and the doctrine of ‘lapse. Moreover, many battles were won as a result of sowing dissension in the enemy camp or taking advantage of a pre-existing one. For example, the first British military success in the subcontinent in Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 was largely a result of the fact that British conspired with the Bengali general Mir Jaffar against Nawab Siraj-ud-daula of Bengal whose army simply looked on as the British defeated the Nawab. Besides, defeated armies were never decisively destroyed and the Indian *sepoys* or *sipahis* conspired with the British in annexing other parts of the subcontinent as well as in maintaining order. For example, the revolt of 1857 was largely confined to the Bengal army and was put down with the help of Bhumihar Brahmins of Baneras, the Madras Army and the Bombay Army.

Where the strategic behavior of British India differed the most from “Indian” empires/states was in its external orientation. For example, since the British Indian Army was serving a foreign power, it fought beyond the confines of the region, for example, in Java and in the Red Sea area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as in parts of the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Europe during the two world wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to defend the interests of the empire. Moreover, as already explained in section 5.2, the British established their naval dominance in the Indian Ocean between Aden and Singapore and maintained a series of ‘buffer states’ along the periphery of the Indian subcontinent. To defend the core of their Indian empire, the British annexed Sindh and Punjab in the 1840s; established a system of protectorate relationships with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan; and even annexed Burma in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>202</sup>

## **6. INDIA’S GRAND STRATEGIC PARADIGM**

On the basis of the analysis in Section 5, this section highlights the major elements of continuity in the security behavior of all the pan-Indian powers analysed in this study. These include:

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<sup>202</sup> To understand how British power was established in the subcontinent, see Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, and Political Economy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 45-85. For similarities in the foreign and security policies of the “paramount” powers in the subcontinent – the British India and the Republic of India – see, A Martin Wainwright, “Regional Security and Paramount Powers: The British Raj and Independent India” in *South Asia Approaches the Millennium: Reexamining National Security*, edited by Marvin G Weinbaum and Chetan Kumar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc., 1995), pp. 41-62. To understand the importance of military power to British rule in South Asia, see Douglas Peers, “South Asia”, in *War in the Modern World Since 1815*, edited by Jeremy Black (London: Routledge, 2003).

- Moral Realism – India’s approach to international relations is best characterised by what may be called “moral realism”, that is, a drive towards power maximisation primarily due to structural reasons, including the use of force when necessary under the veneer of morality. More importantly, ‘morality’ has not had a fixed and constant meaning. Morality as preached by India has always been context dependent and in consonance with its national interests. A strong and powerful India (under the Mauryas, the Guptas and the Mughals) has historically engaged in power maximisation through conquest, but has always justified it by moral overtones. A weak India (early post-independence India) has used morality as a tool of realpolitik to wield more influence than its actual capabilities afforded it.
- Regional Hegemony, Strategic Autonomy, and Strategic Unity – Security has always had an external as well as an internal dimension for India. In her external relations, India has always aspired to become the undisputed regional hegemon of South Asia. India has historically sought to establish regional hegemony by maximising her power and by seeking the submission of the smaller independent states in the subcontinent. India has tried to ensure that the smaller independent subcontinental states do not pursue policies – security, economic, diplomatic – inimical to her own interests.<sup>203</sup> At the same time, India has resisted and sought to minimise the influence of extra-regional powers within the subcontinent.

Moreover, substantial resources have always been channeled ‘inwards’ as all pan-Indian powers have had a pre-occupation with internal security. In their internal affairs, all pan-Indian states have resisted interference by foreign powers – subcontinental and extra-regional – analogous to their external behavior. In Indian security behavior, the subcontinent has always been considered as a single strategic unit and India has always sought autonomy in its strategic affairs.

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<sup>203</sup> Delivering a speech at the India International Centre in February 2005, India’s Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran indirectly articulated India’s regional security doctrine by mentioning that countries of South Asia lacked a common security doctrine in spite of occupying the same geographical space. Another prominent theme that emerged from this speech included India’s reassurance that it respected its neighbors’ independence and sovereignty. In addition, Saran indirectly voiced India’s hegemonic role in the region by saying that India would not like to see any regional institution being used as a vehicle to countervail India, the largest and the strongest country in South Asia. For the full-text, see Shyam Saran. (2005). *India and its Neighbours*, [Online]. Available: <http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2005/02/14ss01.htm> [2005, February 28].

The Mauryas, the Guptas, and the Mughals pursued an expansionist strategy to establish regional hegemony within the Indian subcontinent, i.e., they pursued an ‘Indian Manifest Destiny’.<sup>204</sup> They aspired to rule and succeeded in ruling subcontinental sized states, while co-existing with other (smaller) states within the subcontinent after the smaller states submitted to their regional hegemony. The Republic of India was born subcontinental in size and consequently did not have to pursue an expansionist strategy. India did not annex East Pakistan after emerging victorious in the 1971 Bangladesh War since the territory did not afford India any strategic advantage. On the contrary, political annexation of Bangladesh would have disrupted India’s already delicate religious balance and would have caused an enormous socio-economic strain on New Delhi. India is also home to most of South Asia’s natural resources. As a result, it has little to gain by trying to annex the territories of its poorer and overpopulated subcontinental neighbors. Moreover, the ethnic and religious diversity of its smaller neighbors further reduces India’s desire, if any, to politically annex them. India is a status quo power on the question of territory today. However, this does not mean that India has been averse to expansion in South Asia in the past. India did absorb Sikkim through political means when the opportunity arose in the 1970s primarily to increase its strategic depth along parts of its eastern borders with China. India also absorbed Goa militarily for mostly domestic political reasons.<sup>205</sup> In the past, India expanded when the opportunity for considerable strategic advantages arose at low political and economic costs.

India’s history has always been interpreted as a series of foreign invasions from the passes of the northwest. As a result, Indian strategic thinkers have failed to realise that all the pan-Indian powers (whenever they have existed) have shielded the subcontinent from extra-regional influences. The Mauryas shielded the subcontinent from the Greeks, the Guptas from the Huns, the Mughals from the Uzbeks and Persians and British India from the Russians and the French. Like the earlier pan-Indian states, independent India has also sought to shield the subcontinent from the influence of extra-regional powers (most

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<sup>204</sup> ‘Manifest Destiny’ was the policy of expansion that the United States pursued from its birth to expand from the Atlantic to the Pacific seaboard. At the heart of this policy was the notion that it was the historic destiny of white, democratic, American civilization to spread across the North American continent. However, this notion did not survive the American Civil War, and the United States was content after emerging as the most powerful state in the Americas. For a detailed explanation, see Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 13-89.

<sup>205</sup> Goa, which was a Portuguese colony for over 450 years, was not a part of British India. In fact, it was not even a part of Mughal India. Even if India was against colonialism, it had no legal rights over Goa. Goa’s absorption into the Indian federation must be seen as India’s ‘expansion’ in South Asia.

notably the US and China), i.e., India has historically pursued an Indian version of the ‘Monroe Doctrine’<sup>206</sup>. In a nutshell, India aspires for the strategic unity of South Asia, seeks hegemony in this region as well as autonomy in her strategic affairs.

- Politico-Military Behavior - In Indian security behavior, warfare has always been a part of statecraft which includes diplomacy, suzerainty, treaties, assassinations, covert and intelligence operations, and economic sanctions. For India, war has always been political and multi-dimensional. Warfare has never been the exclusive realm of the military alone. More importantly, the overt use of force has always been the last resort. In Indian security behavior, victory has always meant domination and/or assimilation and/or political accommodation. It has seldom if ever, resulted in the total obliteration of the enemy.<sup>207</sup> India’s politico-military behavior has always been Clausewitzian as it has always recognised the dual nature of war. There has never been a sharp disjunction between the military and the political in India’s security behavior.<sup>208</sup>
- Strategic Orientation – India’s strategic orientation has been ‘defensive’ against extra-regional powers, however, India’s strategic orientation can be best described as ‘offensive defense’ within the subcontinent.
- Adaptability – India’s security behavior has always exhibited slow and gradual adaptability to changing/emerging political and military trends. As a result of constant migrations and invasions, the Indian society is remarkably open to foreign influences and has been (and arguably still is) adept at adapting them for her own subcontinental settings. India has exhibited slow and gradual change in terms of political ideas, military technology, organisation, tactics etc. However, it has shown a remarkable continuity as far as the four features mentioned above are concerned.

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<sup>206</sup> In 1823, President James Monroe announced a statement drafted by John Quincy Adams opposing extra-hemispheric intervention in the Americas. This statement came to be known as the ‘Monroe Doctrine’, and was primarily motivated by the desire to minimize the influence of European powers in the Americas. However, it was not until 1898 when the United States emerged victorious in the Spanish-American War that it actually removed the last extra-hemispheric great power from the Americas, achieved great-power status, and emerged as the ‘regional hegemon’ of the Americas. For a detailed description of the ‘Monroe Doctrine’, see Ernest R May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

<sup>207</sup> According to Bajpai, India’s security practice is close to what he calls “modified structuralism”. He explains that Indian policymakers have sought to protect India’s territorial integrity and the independence of its foreign policy. He further adds that negotiations and diplomacy are as important in countering internal and external threats to India’s security, as is military power. See Kanti Bajpai, “India: Modified Structuralism”, in *Asian Security Practice*, op. cit.

<sup>208</sup> To understand this dual nature of war, see Peter Paret, “Clausewitz”, in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*.

This remarkable continuity in India's security behavior through millennia and across diverse political systems as well significantly different religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities of its ruling elite goes to show that India has a grand strategy that has been shaped significantly by its historical experiences as well as geography and the structure of the system. The trends highlighted above may then be regarded as the core features of India's grand strategic paradigm.

## **7 GLIMPSE INTO INDIA'S FUTURE SECURITY BEHAVIOR**

It is evident that India's foreign/security policy behavior has supported the main tenets of offensive realism.<sup>209</sup> In a nutshell, India has pursued the following policies to maximise its relative power –

- Territorial Expansion – Hyderabad and Goa (through military means), and Sikkim (through political means)
- Protectorates – India is the only Asian state that has underwritten the security of other states – Bhutan and Nepal
- Use of Force
  - 1971 Bangladesh War
  - Military Interventions in Sri Lanka and Maldives in the 1980s
- Threat of Use of Force/Coercive Diplomacy – India launched the biggest military mobilisation in its history after the December 2001 terrorist attacks on the Indian parliament and threatened to use force against Pakistan. As a result, on 12 January 2002, Musharraf stated that Pakistani territory would not be used to promote terrorism anywhere in the world (including India).<sup>210</sup>
- Acquiring Power Projection Capabilities – India has been modernising its army as well as acquiring naval (aircraft carriers and submarines) and air (mid-air refueling) power projection capabilities. India has established its first tri-services base in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. India also intends to gain access to military logistics facilities outside the 'region', for example, in Iran, Tajikistan and Singapore.

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<sup>209</sup> According to this theory, the structure of the system causes states to maximise their relative power, with regional hegemony as their ultimate goal. For a detailed understanding of the theory of offensive realism and state behavior as per this theory, see Mearsheimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-167, 234-333.

<sup>210</sup> C Raja Mohan, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-199.

- Economic Means – India blockaded Nepal in the late 1980s to express its displeasure at Nepal's arms purchases without India's consent. India also subsidises the economies of Nepal and Bhutan. The citizens of these two countries can freely enter India, study in any Indian educational institution by paying the same fees as an Indian citizen and work in almost all the sectors of India's economy.

It was structural considerations that have led India to pursue these policies. These included overt threats from China and Pakistan, as well as the threat of extra-regional interference in the affairs of South Asian states. India is also expanding its military capabilities to protect its growing external trade and energy needs. Based on the trends in the preceding section, it is deduced that as India becomes wealthy, it will work towards maximising its political and military power and to attain regional hegemony in accordance with the core features of offensive realism.

To a large extent, the geography of the subcontinent has been instrumental in demanding the strategic unity of the region. India will work towards ensuring that no subcontinental state pursues policies inimical to India's political, economic or security interests either alone or together with other South Asian states or extra-regional powers. The main impediment to India's realisation of its undeclared goal is Pakistan and the Kashmir dispute. Even though it is difficult to predict whether or not this dispute will be resolved any time soon, it can be said with certainty that India will pursue policies that will directly or indirectly lead Pakistan (as well as other South Asian states) to acquiesce to India's predominance in the region. However, India can realise this goal only if its economy continues to grow.

There are good reasons to believe that India's economy is on an upward trajectory.<sup>211</sup> A rapidly growing India is likely to align all South Asian economies with its own, which is itself projected to emerge as one of the largest in the world.<sup>212</sup> A rising India has two options vis-à-vis Pakistan – its neutralisation as a challenger<sup>213</sup> or its accommodation.<sup>214</sup> Irrespective

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<sup>211</sup> Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, "Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050", *Goldman Sachs, Global Economics Paper*, Number 99, October 1, 2003. According to this study, India will emerge as the third largest economy in the world by 2032 (behind US and the China) and after 2050 will be the only major economy still growing at a rate of 5%p.a. or more.

<sup>212</sup> C Raja Mohan calls for an end to the 'economic partition' of the subcontinent by proposing closer economic interaction revolving around trade in goods and energy sources. See C Raja Mohan, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-253.

<sup>213</sup> Nuclear weapons and India's own preferred security behaviour predicated on domination and accommodation (as opposed to destruction through brute force) make this strategy unviable. However, India

of the policy it pursues, India will become the regional hegemon of South Asia. A rapidly growing India that decentralises power within the Indian federation (from central government to state governments) and integrates the economies of South Asia with its own is highly likely to co-opt Pakistan, as well as the other South Asian states strategically (not politically) in the medium- to long-term.

The Republic of India is not an expansionist power and has no overt territorial ambitions in South Asia (or beyond). The maintenance of the territorial integrity of India is one of the guiding principles of India's security policy – internal as well as external. If its vital national interests are threatened, it is likely to react offensively – at first, politically, diplomatically, economically and covertly, using its intelligence organisations, failing which it will resort to the overt use of force within its boundaries as well as in the rest of South Asia. However, it will portray its offensive actions as defensive measures. Moreover, it will not seek to decisively destroy its adversaries, instead it will seek to politically accommodate them and dominate them.

In South Asia, India's most important security issues include its Kashmir dispute with Pakistan, insurgency in Northeast India supported by elements in Bangladesh and the security implications of the Maoist rebel groups of Nepal. India will also be willing to work with extra-regional powers to resolve the internal security affairs of its smaller South Asian neighbors as long as they recognise India's predominance and its legitimate security interests in the region. For example, this is demonstrated by India's muted positive response to the assistance provided to Nepal by the United States to curb the Maoist insurgency there.<sup>215</sup>

India is unlikely to initiate offensive military action against any extra-regional power. Though India is likely to act as an extra-regional power in the Middle East, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. India's strategy in these regions involves engaging them politically, militarily, economically and culturally in order to ensure that no single great power

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may try to indirectly neutralise Pakistan through a strategy of containment that brings about structural transformation in Pakistan's domestic environment – political, economic, and even military. See C. Raja Mohan, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-203.

<sup>214</sup> Tellis, "South Asia", p. 251.

<sup>215</sup> The US provided Nepal with US\$17 million worth of military equipment in 2003 and in 2004 it also committed to provide US\$40 million in economic and humanitarian aid. India tacitly accepted American's policies. See Navin Vij and Teresita C Schaffer. (2004). *Nepal's Agony Deepens*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.csis.org/saprog/sam/sam72.pdf> [2004, December 15].



dominates these vital regions, especially one that is hostile to India. This will be the 21<sup>st</sup> century avatar of Lord Curzon's "buffer states" around British India. India will also pursue a strategy to dominate the Indian Ocean Region. But even here, it will be willing to work with extra-regional navies as long as they recognise India's predominance in the region as well its legitimate security interests there. This is demonstrated by the growing co-operation between the Indian and the American navies in the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>216</sup> In this regard (as with India's acceptance of an American role in Nepal), it is important to note that in the nineteenth century, America relied upon the British navy to enforce the Monroe doctrine without ever acknowledging it, until it became sufficiently strong itself.<sup>217</sup>

In the Middle East, India is developing close ties with Israel and Iran. Israel has emerged as India's second-largest supplier of military hardware after Russia.<sup>218</sup> Iran looms large in India's energy security and is crucial for India's access to Central Asia, a region India does not share land borders with. The test for Indian diplomacy in the Middle East will be cultivating closer ties with Israel (and the US) as well as Iran at the same time.<sup>219</sup>

Since politics, security and economics of Central Asia have always decided the future of India, New Delhi is also cultivating closer relations with the countries of this region to safeguard its interests. A rise in Islamic terrorism in this region can have grave consequences for India's security. On the other hand, a politically stable Central Asia can emerge as a major exports market for Indian goods as well a key source of energy (especially natural gas). India has reportedly established its first military base (outside India) in Tajikistan.<sup>220</sup> India is likely to face a security competition with China in Central Asia.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Indian Naval Ships *Sharda* and *Sukanya* relieved US naval ships in the Straits of Malacca during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2001 to protect American commercial shipping from terrorist and piratical attacks there. See Robert O Blake, Jr. (2004). *US-India Relations: The Making of a Comprehensive Relationship*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/rm/35686.htm> [2004, December 15].

<sup>217</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 48-49.

<sup>218</sup> For a comprehensive overview of Indo-Israeli relations, see Efraim Inbar, "The Indian-Israeli Entente", *Orbis*, Volume 48, Issue 1, Winter 2004, pp. 89-104, and Armand Cucciniello and Pramit Mitra, "India and Israel Move Closer Together", *South Asia Monitor*, Number 63, October 1, 2003.

<sup>219</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of Indo-Iranian relations, see Berlin, op. cit. and the Asia Program Special Report, Woodrow Wilson Center. (2004). *The "Strategic Partnership" Between India and Iran*, [Online]. Available: [http://wwics.si.edu/topics/pubs/asia\\_rpt\\_120rev.pdf](http://wwics.si.edu/topics/pubs/asia_rpt_120rev.pdf) [2004, August 25].

<sup>220</sup> Shishir Gupta, "Foothold in Central Asia: India gets own military base", *The Indian Express*, November 13, 2003.

<sup>221</sup> For an overview of India's interests in Central Asia and the emerging contours of the Indo-Chinese rivalry in Central Asia, see Juli A MacDonald, "Rethinking India's and Pakistan's Regional Intent", in NBR Analysis. (2003). *Regional Power Plays in the Caucasus and Central Asia* [Online]. Available: <http://www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/vol14no4/144.pdf> [2004, August 26].

India is keen to forge closer ties with countries in Southeast Asia. India has expressed its desire to establish an India-ASEAN free trade area and is also pursuing individual initiatives with Singapore and Thailand. India is keen on developing infrastructure links (roads and telecommunication links) between parts of its own territory and Southeast Asia. India is also developing close defense ties with Singapore and Vietnam. India recently granted Singapore the permission to train its army and air force on Indian soil.<sup>222</sup> India is also cultivating the military government in Myanmar to secure access to Myanmar's energy fields. Closer ties with the government there will allow New Delhi to destroy insurgents based in Myanmar who are active in India's northeast. India is also forging closer institutional ties with Southeast Asia. As its power grows in the region, India will also begin to balance China's growing influence there.<sup>223</sup>

India recently adopted a new naval doctrine that calls for a "non-provocative strategic capability". This naval doctrine aims to develop a submarine-based minimum nuclear deterrent capability, and littoral warfare capability in order to dominate the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>224</sup> Taking a particular note of China, the doctrine seeks to deal with a "conflict with [an] extra-regional power" and "[protect] persons of Indian-origin and Indian interest abroad".<sup>225</sup> India recently purchased a Russian built Kiev-class aircraft carrier, the *Admiral Gorshkov*, with ground-strike aircraft in order to use it as "an effective instrument of foreign policy".<sup>226</sup> India is currently in possession of one Centaur-class aircraft carrier, INS Viraat (formerly HMS Hermes), which it plans to decommission in 2009 when it will be replaced by Admiral Gorshkov. India has also resumed work on its indigenous aircraft carrier or air defence ship and plans to commission it by 2010-2012.<sup>227</sup> In October 2001, India established its first tri-service unified command, the Andaman & Nicobar Command, in Port Blair in the Bay of Bengal at the mouth of the Straits of Malacca. The Indian government also plans on

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<sup>222</sup> Bhavna Vij-Aurora, "India to Singapore: you can hold military exercises on our soil", *The Indian Express*, April 2, 2004.

<sup>223</sup> For a comprehensive view of India's Southeast Asian policy, see "India's ASEAN Strategy", *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, Volume/Issue: 000/175, 17 October 2003, and Faizal Yahya, "India and Southeast Asia: Revisited", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 25, Number 1, April 2003.

<sup>224</sup> Rahul Bedi, "India outlines vision of future nuclear navy", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, June 23, 2004.

<sup>225</sup> Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India's New Naval Ambition: Plan for Blue-Water Force Includes Ballistic Missile Sub", *Defense News*, June 7, 2004.

<sup>226</sup> Bedi, "India outlines vision of future nuclear navy".

<sup>227</sup> Rahul Bedi, "India's air defence ship gains new momentum", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, August 11, 2004.

setting up a full-fledged air base on the Nicobar Islands.<sup>228</sup> It has speculated that Singapore will grant India greater access to naval facilities as a quid pro quo for allowing its military to train in India. This would extend the Indian Navy's reach into the South China Sea.<sup>229</sup> It is also widely believed that India's efforts to upgrade the Iranian port of Chahbahar are tied to its possible use by the Indian Navy.<sup>230</sup>

## **8 CONCLUSION**

India is unlikely to get entangled in any political or military alliances that curb its strategic space. India will engage in issue-based alliances with different states so long as they advance India's interests. But, it will refrain from entering any alliance that limits its strategic autonomy. Strategic autonomy has been one of the guiding principles of India's approach to international relations. As a result, India is also unlikely to tolerate foreign interference in its internal affairs, and will also resist extra-regional influence elsewhere in South Asia. Strategic unity of the subcontinent has been the imperative of Indian history.

A rising India will aspire to become the regional hegemon of South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, and an extra-regional power in the Middle East, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. *Ceteris paribus*, a rising India will try to establish regional hegemony just like all the other rising great powers have since Napoleonic times, with the long term goal of achieving great power status on an Asian and perhaps even global scale. Even so, there is nothing inevitable about this outcome in India's future. India's future depends on a host of factors that include the military effectiveness of its armed forces; its economic performance in the decades ahead; how it engages the dominant power of the current international system, the United States, as well as the other rising power in the contemporary international system, China<sup>231</sup>; its domestic political stability as well as the quality of its governance; and the social cohesion of this large, diverse and complex nation.

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<sup>228</sup> See "Andaman and Nicobar Command", in *Indian Defense Yearbook 2002*, edited by Lt General (Retd) Jasbir Singh, PVSM (New Delhi: Natraj Publishers, 2002), pp. 303-7.

<sup>229</sup> David Boey, "Sky's the limit with S'pore-India Defence Pact", *The Straits Times*, October 17, 2003.

<sup>230</sup> Berlin, op. cit., p. 3-4.

<sup>231</sup> For a comprehensive overview of Indo-US relations, see Chapter 4 "The US: A Natural Ally?" in C Raja Mohan, op. cit.; Chapter 9 "India and the United States" in Cohen, op. cit.; and Rahul Sagar, "What's in a Name? India and America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Survival*, Autumn 2004. For a comprehensive overview of Indo-Chinese relations, see Chapter 6 "Emulating China", in C Raja Mohan, op. cit.; Cohen, op. cit., pp. 256-264; and Mohan Malik. (2004). *India-China Relations: Giants Stir, Cooperate, and Compete*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/SAS/AsiaBilateralRelations/India-China%20Relations%20Malik.pdf> [2004,

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## APPENDIX – Chronology of Pan-Indian Powers

### **Appendix A – The Mauryas (321 – 181 B.C.)**

Source: John Keay, *India: A History* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 87.

Chandragupta, c321-297 B.C.



Bindusara



Ashoka, c268-233 B.C.



Kunala



Dasaratha



Samprati



Salisuka



Devavarman



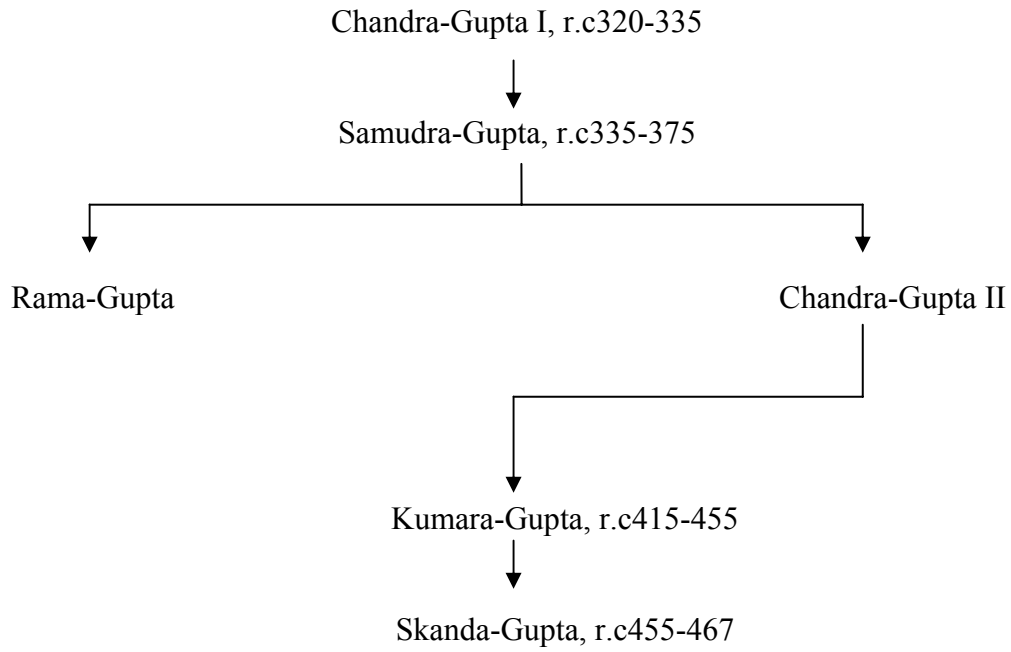
Satadhanvan



Brhadratha, d.c181 B.C.

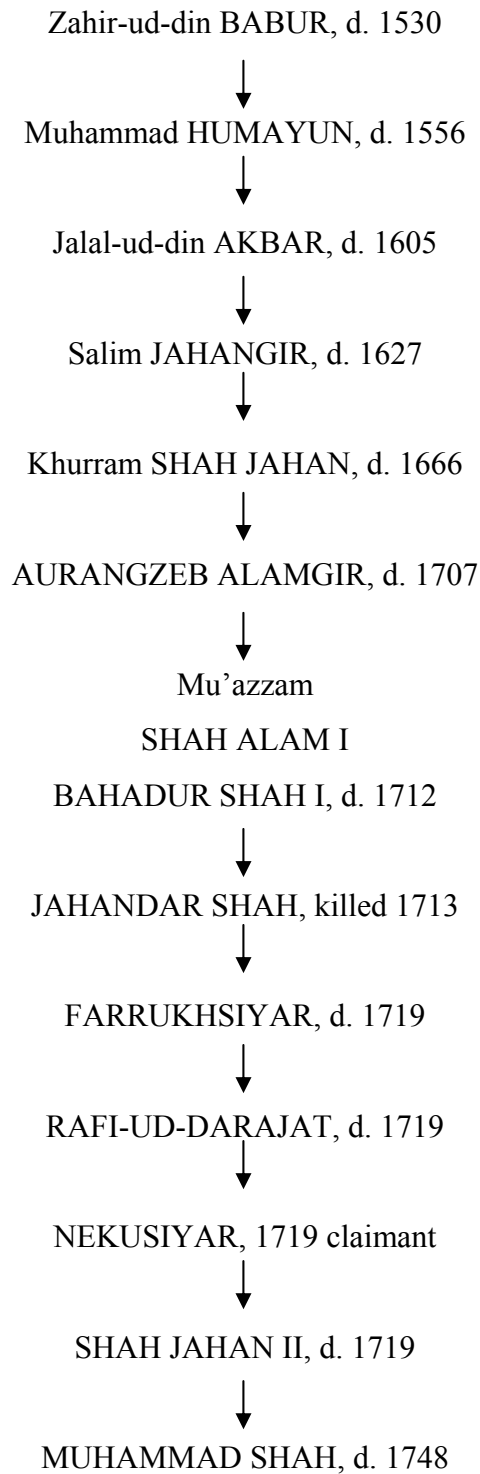
## Appendix B – The Guptas (320 – 467 A.D.)

Source: John Keay, *India: A History* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 135.



### Appendix C – The Mughals (1526 – 1748)

Source: John Keay, *India: A History* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 329, 365.



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