"Regional Security Complexes" in the Third World: Stability and Collaboration

Amitav Acharya
Department of Political Science
National University of Singapore
I. Introduction

Three major developments have underscored the importance of "regional security" in the Third World to the post-Cold War security order. First, regional security emerged as a significant issue in the agenda of superpower dialogue that led to the termination of the Cold War. Indeed, the post-Cold War era owes much to the Soviet acceptance of a "linkage" demanded by the U.S. between Soviet disengagement from Third World regional theatres and the American willingness to improve their strategic relationship. Second, regional conflicts and wars in the Third World have emerged as the chief threat to international order in the post-Cold War era. Their high incidence contrasts sharply with the greatly enhanced stability of the central strategic relationship between the Great Powers. Third, an increasing demand for regional security arrangements (both indigenous and Great Power-sponsored) in the Third World is emerging as a key feature of the post-Cold War security order. The apparent success of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in promoting regional confidence-building between Eastern and Western Europe, and calls for similar-type arrangements in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific, testify to this trend favouring regional approaches to security.

If regional security is of increasing importance, what are the ways of ensuring it? For much of the post-Second World War period, regional security problems were accorded a place of secondary importance in relation to the structure and dynamics of the international system. In this respect, regional security was seen either as a subset of or "stepping stone" to a global collective
security order, (in the Idealist perspective) or as the byproduct of a specific understanding and balance of power among the great powers, especially the superpowers (the realist perspective). In either case, regional security studies were system-centric, lacking an identity of their own as a distinct level of analysis within the international system. To a large extent, this continues to be the case. Regional security analysis is yet to break free from the Cold War paradigm which tended to view most regional conflicts from the prism of superpower rivalry, and judge the performance of regional security arrangements in relation to their dependence on Great Power security guarantees.

Yet, it is clear that the Cold War perspective is increasingly irrelevant in view of recent changes in U.S.-Soviet relationship. In fact, as Mohammed Ayoob has shown, even at the height of the Cold War regional security problems in the Third World always retained a significant measure of autonomy of their own that could not be appreciated by conceptual frameworks stressing superpower dominance. In view of this, regional security analysis requires a major reorientation towards patterns of security interdependence which exist independent of extra-regional influences or at least carefully distinguishes the local structures from the externally-induced ones.

Until now, practitioners of the art had seldom explored the rationale behind, and relevant conceptual frameworks for, regional security analysis. The most sophisticated conceptual tool available, the idea of "regional subsystems", was not only too broad a category, but might have strengthened the system-dominant view (since a regional subsystem can only be defined in relation to a larger international
Against this backdrop, Barry Buzan's concept of "regional security complex" offers a promising tool for conceptualising about regional security in the contemporary international system. It makes at least two very significant contributions. First, it brings out the relative importance of regional security analysis vis-a-vis other, (i.e. national and global) levels of analysis of the international security system. While acknowledging the problems encountered by previous attempts to "fix" the boundaries of regions, Buzan argues that regional analysis remains important and necessary because:

In the absence of any developed sense of region, security analysis tends to polarise between the global system level on the one hand, and the national security level of individual states on the other...security analysis swings between an overemphasis on the dominant role of the great great powers within the global system, and an overemphasis on the internal dynamics and perspectives of individual states.

Second and most importantly, the concept of "regional security complex" offers the necessary criteria for its self-definition which are rooted within indigenous patterns of security interdependence, rather than general and systemic factors shaping the nature of the international security system. A regional security complex consists of:

"local sets of states exist whose major security perceptions and concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national security perceptions cannot realistically be considered apart from one another...This name has the advantage of indicating both the character of the attribute that defines the set (security), and the notion of intense interdependence that distinguishes any particular set from its neighbours."

As Buzan views them, regional security complexes are localised sets of anarchy mirroring the international system at large. Their
boundaries are indicated by a structural and indigenous pattern of security interdependence beyond which indifference sets in. Also, regional security complexes are a modern phenomenon, they underscore the fragmentation and release of the "overlay" of external influences on regional settings (such as the colonial empires of the European powers). This security interdependence may involve conditions both of amity and enemity among the actors, but the latter usually is the more crucial determinant. "Unlike most other attempts to define regional subsystems, security complexes rest, for the most part, on the interdependence of rivalry rather than on the interdependence of shared interests".

Using such a criteria, one could discern a number of regional security complexes that have emerged in the Third World in the past two decades. In South Asia, the India-Pakistan rivalry defines the boundaries of such a complex. Other examples include the ASEAN-Vietnam rivalry defining the Southeast Asian complex, the Arab-Israeli conflict defining the Middle Eastern complex, the Nicaraguan-El Salvador conflict defining the Central American complex, the Angola-South African conflict defining the Southern African complex.

How does the concept of a security complex facilitate our understanding of ways to enhance regional security? If regional security complexes are defined "usually by a high level of threat/fear which is felt mutually among two or more major states", then their very existence would appear to militate against the prospect for regional security. However, because regional security complexes generally feature an "intense interdependence of national security
perceptions⁸⁺⁸ there remains at least the possibility that such interdependence might involve a positive correlation of actor values and lead to cooperative arrangements among some or all actors to manage regional security problems. As noted before, regional security arrangements have been a marked feature of contemporary Third World security milieu. One could identify a number of them: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the Southeast Asian Complex; the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Maghreb Union within the Middle Eastern complex, the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation within the Southern Asian Complex, the Frontline States within the Southern African complex and the Contadora group within the Central American complex.

The existence and role of these arrangements are important factors in our definition and analysis of regional security complexes. On the one hand, as Buzan and Ayoob have noted, quite a few of these arrangements are subregional alliances that define the line of regional rivalry and polarisation.⁹ But these groupings also help to stabilise the complex by promoting a balance of power vis-a-vis the rival actor/s and reducing the conflict within their own membership. The ASEAN, the GCC and the OFLS are good examples of such arrangements. On the other hand, there are others which help to moderate and reduce the rivalry within the complex. They help actors to regulate their behaviour, promote stability in their mutual expectations, and develop formal or informal models of cooperation. The Contadora group, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation are good examples of such groupings. The Economic Community of West African States
(ECOWAS) also falls within this category; although it is exceptional for being located within a security complex (Western Africa) defined more by the interdependence of shared interests than rivalry.

Based on their record, the idea of security complexes as a tool of regional security analysis can be further developed to explore and identify the elements of, and approaches to, stability and cooperation within them. This paper is addressed to this task. It is divided into two parts. The first part looks at the conditions of security interdependence within a complex and examines those elements which facilitate the emergence of regional security arrangements within a complex. The second part of the paper discusses some of the key motivating factors that underscore patterns of security collaboration within specific regional security arrangements and evaluates their implication for the overall balance between amity and enemity within the regional security complex. This analysis pays close attention to the workings of the above-mentioned security arrangements and draws some lessons as to the possibilities and limits of cooperation within regional security complexes that would be relevant to contemporary debates regarding regional security.

II. Interdependence and Autonomy

Within a regional security complex, two factors play a central role in determining the balance between amity and enemity. These include the degree of security interdependence among individual actors, and a measure of regional identity and autonomy collectively
recognised by them. In this respect, the pattern of security interaction within a complex resembles the dynamics identified by I William Zartman in his perceptive study of the African regional subsystem (although the idea of a security complex denotes a much more specific pattern of interaction than regional subsystems and hence should not be confused with it). To borrow from Zartman, if a regional security complex is taken as a system, then its constituents share "a condition where change at one point of the system affects other points and where intrasystem actions and responses predominate over external influences". x

Security interdependence can be measured in terms of the national security "values" of the states and governments within a complex. National security usually denotes the ability of a state to protect its basic or "core" values, such as political sovereignty and territorial integrity, although this perspective may not be adequate for analysing the security problematique of Third World states. xi In most Third World states, regime survival also becomes an integral part of the national security equation; often the latter is used as a fig-leaf for the former. Security interdependence is thus generally determined by the degree to which both the core and the regime values of one actor is sensitive and vulnerable to changes in the values of the other/s. Security interdependence may underscore either a positive or negative correlation in state and regime values. If values clash, conflict is the result; and this is usually the defining characteristic of regional security complexes. But within a complex, anarchy may not always be the norm; there could be elements of, or movement towards,
commonalities and a positive correlation in state and regime values among the actors. Firstly, intra-complex relationships may be based on the recognition and acceptance of the core and regime values of one state by another. Secondly, the protection and promotion of the core and regime values of one state may be positively influenced by the protection and promotion of the core and regime values in another.

There are many examples of regions in which actors, despite being divided over territorial (core values of the state) or ideological (regime value) disputes, display a common aversion to instability and warfare within the region. This could lead them to manage disputes and achieve stability within the complex. In such complexes, maintaining the status-quo of a non-war situation overrides the impulse to use force to alter the conditions of intra-regional rivalry. A variety of collaborative security arrangements could result from this, thereby reducing the salience of enemity in defining the complex. As will be discussed later, this is the basis for regional security arrangements within Central American and South Asian complexes.

Within security complexes, national threat perceptions are generally a major indicator of value complimentarity among actors and hence are important determinants of security interdependence. Actors within a regional security complex generally have to contend with three kinds of threats. The first of course are the mutually perceived threats among the various segments of the complex. This usually defines the lines of rivalry within the complex. But threats could emanate from the internal level within a state and carry a high spill-over potential. Thus communist insurgencies or separtist
movements involving ethnic minorities living within two contiguous states are examples of such threats. Such threats could be a basis of unity among feuding regional actors if they significantly threaten regional stability and status-quo within the actors. (this is an important, if seldom recognised, basis for cooperation between India and Pakistan). Similarly, threat perceptions, divergent at the intra-state and intra-regional levels, could converge in relation to external threats. Actors may overcome their intra-regional disunity in order to tackle an extra-regional threat. (a common feature of most Third World regions, especially the Middle East)

The question of external threats is important because it links up with the powerful issue of regional autonomy and identity, which is another important determinant of the balance between amity and enmity within a regional security complex. This is evident from a quick look at the formation of regional security complexes in the Third World. For example, at the outset of the post-war era and decolonisation, it was possible for Third World states to overcome intra-regional rivalries and seek cooperation in resolving disputes due to their quest for autonomy from the colonial order. Early forms of Third World regionalism was closely intertwined with the demand for decolonization and the assertion of independent nationhood. But conceptions of autonomy within Third World regional security complexes may vary. At one extreme, the concept of autonomy in Third World regionalist arguments is often equated with self-reliance and elimination of all outside intervention in regional affairs. Many Third World regional security groupings profess this objective, even
where the resources and capabilities at the disposal of their members remain grossly inadequate to realise it. On a lesser note, autonomy is viewed not so much in terms of shielding the region from all outside influences, but of being able to exercise a degree of control over the latter so that its nature and scope is determined in accordance with the concerns and imperatives of the regional actors. Thus autonomy in this sense becomes compatible with efforts to increase cooperation with outside actors if the payoffs are real and substantial, and minimise association with actors if it imposes costs and conditions that are not within the realm of acceptability, but the regional configuration claims for itself the right to decide what is beneficial and what is harmful to its interests and expectations. While the desire to eliminate or at least control the role of outside actors reflects a negative concept of autonomy, the latter also has a positive dimension. Simply stated, the positive notion of autonomy involves maximising the ability of the regional actors to manage issues of mutual concern, and to make a greater impact on the international system than is possible through individual efforts. In a sense, the negative and positive notions of autonomy are two sides of the same coin. If external influences on intra-regional issues are to be limited or regulated, then actors within a regional security complex must be able to meet the needs and expectations of the participants in relation to these issues. The capabilities needed to fulfill these needs may be mobilised from the resources and capabilities available within it, although this may be supplemented by capabilities and resources borrowed or obtained from outside powers through collective bargaining
that takes into account the interests of all the actors participating in the regional complex. The need to perform these tasks also forms the rationale for creating cooperative institutions within the complex.

A quest for autonomy within regional security complexes may be enhanced by the declining credibility of the Cold War security guarantees offered by the Great Powers. In the 1960s and 1970s, the policy of geopolitical withdrawal adopted by Britain and the U.S. prompted many of their Third World clients to view regional security arrangements as a viable and necessary option. In recent times, the declining Soviet support for clients like Vietnam, Libya and Nicaragua has led them to seek accommodation with their regional adversaries. Regional autonomy could also reflect the geopolitical design of the regional hegemonic leader seeking to reduce outside influences in order to enhance its own (e.g.: Indonesia, India, Iraq).

If the past is any guide, a strong sense of autonomy could generate a desire for collaboration within Third World regional security complexes. A case in point is the general popularity in the Third World of the so-called "regionalist doctrines" which stressed the autonomy of regional actors against liberal universalism. These doctrines stressed the value of regional organisations in the pacific settlement of international conflicts on the following assumptions:
1. Sensitivity to, and understanding of, the security problems of a state is likely to be greater on the part of its regional neighbours than of states located at some distance.
2. Geographic proximity also determines the ability to provide prompt material assistance to a threatened state.
3. Regional arrangements for security assistance could diminish the scope for the involvement of Great Powers, and keep conflicts from spreading beyond a limited geographic area.
Autonomy was also reflected in another familiar position of Third World countries regarding regional cooperation, i.e. their rejection of Cold War alliances. When the United States and the Soviet Union began floating the idea of regional security alliances with their clients in the Third World, this was met with rejection from those (mainly members of the Non-Aligned Movement) who claimed that such Cold War alliances contributed little to the security of the Third World states, indeed these raised the prospect of insecurity by involving the developing countries into the machinations of the superpowers. The Cold War alliances were rejected for disguising the domination of the Great Powers over their unequal Third World allies. Regionalism, in this view, would not make a real contribution to the security of the developing countries unless it involved states with approximately equal resources and capabilities, and excluded the Great Powers. Although the end of the Cold War diminishes the appeal of such regionalist logic, autonomy from Great Power machinations still remains a powerful basis for collaboration within Third World security complexes.

To sum up, the nature of security interdependence, national threat perceptions, and quest for autonomy are some of the crucial factors affecting the prospect for collaboration within regional security complexes. Depending on the specific dynamic of complexes, several patterns of collaboration are possible. Looking at the history of major security complexes in the Third World, at least five major motivating factors can be identified which have produced patterns of
collaboration either on a complex-wide or sub-complex basis. In the case of complex-wide collaboration, security arrangements may emerge with a view to moderate the central rivalry within the complex. In case of subcomplex-wide cooperation, security arrangements are usually geared to creating a balance of power within the complex. The following sections will elaborate on the nature and impact of these various motivating factors behind, and forms of, regional security arrangements.

III. Regional Security Arrangements: Motivations and Patterns

1. Intra-regional conflict-control

Perhaps the most common form of regional security arrangements revolves around the goal of providing a forum for the control of the defining conflict within a regional security complex.

Conflict-control requires several measures. Regional security arrangements usually promote adherence to a set of norms in the conduct of inter-state relations. The most common norms include (1) non-interference in the internal affairs of member states by other members; (2) respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (3) pacific settlement of disputes and; (4) limiting the scope for foreign intervention in intra-regional conflicts. Such norms could be promoted by formal regional organisations, whether or not they include all the actors as members. ASEAN, GCC, SAARC, ECOWAS, are examples of regional
organisations which have established norms of security interaction within their respective regional complexes. Norms for conflict-control may be reinforced by institutions with the authority and resources to enforce them. Regional security arrangements may provide a formal mechanism for the settlement of disputes among its members, although such a role could be performed on an informal basis either by the leading power within the complex or other designated mediators. Institutions can be developed to promote adherence to norms and devise procedures, practices and forums for conflict-management and resolution. When a regional security complex develops institutions, it can undertake a wide variety of measures for the pacific settlement of disputes, such as: direct negotiation, good offices, mediation, investigation and conciliation, judicial settlement and arbitration. But a look at contemporary regional arrangements reveal that most have preferred informal procedures for mediation to formal arbitration. In fact, the mechanism for the pacific settlement of disputes within ASEAN and GCC has never been called into action.

The optimal condition of regional conflict control is the Deutschian notion of a "security community" - a group of states which have developed "institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a 'long' time, dependable expectations of 'peaceful change'" in their mutual relations and rule out the use of force as a means of problem solving. However, such communities require a measure of integration among actors and therefore rare in the Third World. ASEAN is the only regional security
arrangement which can claim to this status, although this is questionable. ASEAN's role in confronting, rather than coopting, the Indochinese states in the 1970s and 1980s, undermined its credentials as a true regional security community, although current regional circumstances now provides it with an opportunity to alter its course.

When a complex is defined by a central rivalry, then "security regimes" are a more practicable alternative to security communities. A "security regime" has been defined by Jervis as "principles, rules and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behaviour in the belief that others will reciprocate." As Stein has argued, security regimes in practical life can be useful tool in constraining the use of force in conflict management. Security regimes may exist even where formal institutions and procedure for conflict-control are not viable or effective.

The notion of a security regime is important as it draws attention to those situations in which relationship among actors does not reflect enough amity to warrant a "security community", and where actors recognize that the costs of rivalry may exceed its benefits. The CSCE is a good example of a real-life security regime. Its role in promoting reconciliation between east and west Europe is of relevance to Third World security complexes which are similarly defined by regional polarisation. But the prospect for security regimes within Third World regional security complexes can not be taken for granted. Security regimes require Great Power consensus, which is difficult even in the so-called post-Cold War era. Second, the prospect of developing security regimes is undermined by the presence of
revolutionary actors, a common feature of unstable Third World security complexes.

In considering the conflict-control role of regional arrangements, there is an underlying assumption that such conflicts can be resolved. Yet, history shows that many conflicts in the Third World are protracted for which no quick and legal solutions can be found. Thus, regional security complexes may develop evolutionary methods of conflict-management. Conflict-management is an intermediate step between conflict-prevention and resolution. The basic objective in protracted conflict situations is to contain "conflict within boundaries which would make it more manageable and tolerable to both parties involved as well as to the international environment". Managing conflicts towards their eventual resolution requires not only dialogue or negotiations, but also institution of confidence-building measures and peacekeeping operations. Such measures could be undertaken independently or in cooperation with other bodies, including the UN. Security regime may play an useful role in the development of such confidence-building measures, as exemplified in the case of the CSCE.

But any form of conflict control within regional security complexes is constrained by several factors. Institutions created for the purpose frequently lack the resources, both human and material, to undertake major diplomatic or peacekeeping operations (especially the latter). Regional actors may lack the motivation and objectivity require to ensure conflict management within regional security complexes. The earlier regionalist doctrines which claimed that
geographic proximity would facilitate better understanding of the situation, that "geographic neighbours are more likely both to understand the factual background of a conflict and to share the norms that are relevant to the task of controlling the conflict". However, neighbours are rarely impartial in such situations. As Wilcox points out, "...in many instances the people of a particular region are less well-equipped than outsiders to settle their own differences".

Conflict-resolution within a regional security complex is also affected by competition from outside parties, including the UN. The role of the UN is especially important here. Haas establishes that until the mid-1960s, cases referred to regional organisations tended to be intense in terms of the violence they generated than the UN. This ensured a healthy "division of labour" between globalism and regionalism and lead Haas to suggest that regionalism could "compensate for the deficiencies of global arrangements". But more recently, regional groups have come to compete with the UN in terms of conflict referrals, and this has contributed to the poor record of regional organisations in conflict-control. Yet, there need not be competition. As Urquhart notes, it is possible for the UN and regional security arrangements to complement each other in the task of conflict-resolution.

2. Regime Maintenance

Another motivating factor for regional security arrangements is regime maintenance. These arrangements frequently involve subregional blocs within a complex, and hence are more suited to the goal of
maintaining a regional balance of power, rather than provide the framework for conflict-resolution.

The concept of "regime security" requires elaboration. The need to distinguish between the security of the state and the survival instinct of their rulers is fundamental to understanding the essential security milieu of Third World countries. Most Third World states are prone to domestic instability not just because of their loose national structures, or the lack of a close fit between the state and nation. They also suffer from a lack of consensus on fundamental political rules of governance. The narrow base of their regimes and the various challenges facing their continued rule are often transposed into "national security" threats, and affect the way national security policy of the Third World states is defined and conducted. Given the authoritarian hold of rulers over the policy-making process, and their constant vulnerability to a wide range of political pressures from within and without, their instinct for self-preservation often takes precedence over the security interests of the state or nation. National security becomes a fig-leaf for regime security.

Moreover, the interpretation of security threats, whether domestic or external, by Third World countries is influenced by the degree to which they question the legitimacy their rulers. Threats could be perceived even in the absence of physical danger to the state structure. For example, the rise of revolutionary movements or ideologies abroad which creates an alternative model of political rule to their own could be interpreted by regimes as a serious challenge to even when there is no threat of military invasion.
Such regime insecurities, if shared by a group of rulers with similar political and ideological values and conditions of domestic instability, may diffuse inter-state rivalry and promote collaboration within a regional security complex. Collaboration to ensure regime maintenance could be undertaken in several ways. Adherence to the norm of non-interference removes intra-regional subversive threats to regimes. Joining a regional organisation with a ostensible cooperative agenda could help the domestic legitimacy of insecure rulers. Regimes may collaborate against external subversion and/or domestic insurgencies that may threaten their survival.

There are many contemporary example of such cooperation. ASEAN states overcame mutual hostility in the face of a common threat to regime survival. The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Even in case of regional groups which have emerged in response to a mix of threats perceived by their members, regime security is one of the key factors influencing the decision of the countries to participate in the regional group.

But collective regime maintenance by a group of narrowly-based regimes adds to their collective vulnerability. It raises the possibility that insurrection against one regime in the group could find a sympathetic echo in the domestic spheres of the others. Moreover, regime maintenance within a security complex is usually associated with subregional groups that aggravates regional polarisation. As in the case of ASEAN and GCC, regime maintenance efforts by a segment of the security complex could be provocative to the remaining actors and the latter may respond with hostility. Iranian
and Iraqi hostility towards Kuwait and Saudi Arabia resulted partly from its exclusion from the GCC. Antagonistic subregional alliances based on shared regime vulnerabilities tends to produce exclusivist frameworks for conflict-resolution in which a group of actors may seek to seek preferred solutions that may not be acceptable to the other party. In recent case where this has taken place, conflict-resolution has not been successful. For example, ASEAN and GCC sought to manage Cambodia and Iran-Iraq war, but their very existence reflected the polarisation of Southeast Asia and the Gulf.

On the other hand, as the case of ASEAN and GCC reveals, regime maintenance could produce specific forms of security collaboration that may preserve a balance of power within a security complex. Such a balance may be a stabilising factor for the complex and the security arrangement formed initially to help the task of regime maintenance may be expanded to become the basis for reconciliation with adversaries. Recent calls to expand ASEAN to include Indochinese states and the GCC's prospective replacement by a grouping including Iran and Iraq attests to this possibility.

3. **Balancing Regional Hegemony**

A third motivating factor for regional security arrangements concerns the position of the regional dominant power. This type of arrangement allows the weaker actors to attain a balance of power vis-a-vis the dominant actor, and provides the basis for creating incentives and interest on the part of all concerned for conflict-control.
In many regional security complexes, the power of one regional actor far exceeds that of the remaining actors either individually or collectively. A regional security complex may situate traditional Great Power among weak states such as a Central America, or an emergent Third World "regional influential" such as the Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, India in South Asia, Indonesia and Vietnam in Southeast Asia. The essential question facing such complexes is: how to ensure that the security interests and objectives of the strong and the weak converge to make the complex stable. Does a hegemonic power provide stability to the regional security complex?

Recent example show that stability can be attained by carefully cultivated regionalism involving the hegemon and the lesser states. Such regionalism must seek to develop "a consensus regarding the role of the pivotal power within the regional grouping, a consensus shared by the pivotal power itself". xxv

To be sure, the prospect for such regionalism is bleak if the lesser actors fear that it would provide an opportunity to the dominant power to confirm its hegemony. On the other hand, the willingness of the dominant power to abide by regional norms and accept restraints on its policy towards neighbours may be the incentive needed for the latter to "bandwagon", especially if the dominant power agrees to a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the lesser members. Another incentive of course is the prospect of receiving assistance from the dominant power against common external threats. Thornton argues, the co-option of a large threatening power to a regional group of smaller states "could provide a pillar of strength around which the
other members can rally for leadership and protection; or, if the new member was previously a threat to the system, bring a new element of tranquility and self-confidence." xxvi

For a dominant regional power, interest in regionalism could be undermined by fear that it would provide the lesser state to gang up against it. "Large states are often inclined to deal bilaterally with their smaller neighbours rather than submit to the restraints of multilateral decision-making". xxvii A good example is the policy of "exclusive bilateralism" preferred by India within the South Asian region. This policy reflects India's apprehension that participating in a regional group like SAARC would dilute the leverage it can have by dealing with its neighbours individually. xxviii But in other cases, like Indonesia's position in ASEAN, such fears on the part of the dominant power are overcome by a recognition that a regional forum would it an opportunity to assert its influence outside the region even though it meant accepting a less assertive posture in relation to the members of the regional group. Indonesia's position in ASEAN is a good example of this equation. The position of Saudi Arabia within the GCC is somewhat more "hegemonic" than Indonesia's within ASEAN, but the Saudis have accepted some restraints and moved to settle border disputes with fellow members. The protection accorded by the increasingly powerful Saudi military umbrella also provides an added incentive to the lesser GCC states to accept Riyadh's regional preeminence. In case of India within SAARC, however, the situation is completely different. The power of India in relation to other SAARC members and the failure of the group to develop appropriate norms for
non-interference in internal affairs of the members have seriously damaged the credibility of SAARC. The position of the US within the OAS has been a source of disunity. The credibility of the organisation has suffered severely from the success of the U.S. in using it to promote its ideological objectives and facilitate intervention in Latin America.

With the end or prospective end to Third World conflicts of the Cold War period, many regional security complexes now face the challenge of having to deal with the dominant regional powers which were perceived by them as the main threat to regional order. Examples of such actors include Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua within their respective security complexes. Co-opting such actors into a regional arrangement could prove to be a useful tactic, although this may require the restructuring of existing regionals security arrangement.

The successful example of the Contadora group in co-opting Nicaragua into a system of regional security should serve as testimony to the effectiveness of this approach. Recent developments suggest that this could be the likely direction for the members of ASEAN and GCC in their dealing with Vietnam and Iran respectively.

4. Extra-regional Intervention and Self-Reliance

Some regional security arrangements are geared largely to the task of preventing and regulating intervention by outside powers. Autonomy need not imply expulsion of outside actors from the region; but it must at least involve an "ability to keep outsiders from defining the issues that constitute the local agenda". xxix
The goal of non-intervention assumes particular significance to Third World states in view of their colonial past and their fear of Great Power interventionism. But it is not simply an ideological concern. Alliances with superpowers have not proved to be effective against the most pressing security threats facing the Third World states. Regional alliances such as SEATO and CENTO lacked relevance in addressing the threat of domestic rebellion or subversion. Their eventual collapse can be attributed to the realisation on the part of the client states themselves that seeking outside help against domestic opponents is likely to be counter-productive. Such external interference could aggravate the political instability already threatening their legitimacy and survival.

The declining credibility of security guarantees offered by the Great Powers has fuelled the trend towards self-reliance and autonomy in the Third World. The ability of the Great Powers to assist their clients is no longer credible because of their domestic popular sentiments against foreign military ventures. In addition, the growing ability of Third World states to resist intervention and the diminishing access to foreign military bases, are increasingly important factors inhibiting the Great Power from undertaking overseas security commitments.

The emergence of some of the regional associations, such as ASEAN and GCC, was strongly influenced by the disillusionment of their members with external security guarantees. The ASEAN and GCC and SAARC include erstwhile members of formal military alliances with superpowers. The formation of these groups followed explicit rejection
by members of these alliances. Regionalism was an expression of their desire to reduce dependence on external powers and provided an useful way to improve the conditions of their security.

It should be noted that the ability of regional actors to manage and resolve crisis within its membership is considered an essential aspect of its ability to limit outside intervention. But a number of other, more direct, measures could be undertaken to reduce the presence and role of external powers in the region. One is neutralisation as has been advocated by ASEAN. Other forms of non-intervention regimes and arms control measures such as nuclear free zones, have been more common.

But the record of regionalism in limiting outside intervention is a mixed one. Implementation and enforcement of non-intervention regimes is a major problem. Several factors account for this. Perhaps the most important constraint is the continued dependence of most Third World states on external protection. Regionalism is no substitute for external security guarantees because of the limited military and technological capabilities of the regional actors. Proposals to exclude external powers from maintaining a military presence in the region have proved to be highly contentious within regional security complexes. Furthermore, those complexes which developed a consensus against outside intervention have virtually no authority or ability to enforce their non-intervention regimes even if such proposals are supported by a consensus. The Great Powers find it against their interest to adhere to such constraints on the freedom of action. The fate of major non-intervention regimes such as the Zone of Peace,
Freedom and Neutrality proposed by the ASEAN and the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace proposed by the littoral states of the Indian Ocean are good examples of the failure of regional non-intervention regimes in the Third World due to internal divisions as well as Great Power intransigence.

Within a regional security complex, perception of outside powers can not be uniform, some fall into the categories of guarantors, some adversarial. Thus different policies need to be worked out in relation to different outside powers. Nonetheless, some regional groups have attempted to create a common non-intervention regime applicable to all outside powers which may be persuaded to sign agreements declaring the region a zone of peace, and commit themselves to non-interference. The pursuit of this option depends on the individual strength, cooperation and the strength of adversaries. While the trend in the Third World regional groups have been to avoid formal alliances with outside powers, particularly the superpowers, where the regional group consists of weak powers facing powerful adversaries, there could be an implicit division of labour in accordance to which the regional states will be capable and expected to look after intra-regional security issues while allowing for supportive intervention by their outside power guarantor in the event of major external threats.

5. Collective Defence

Collective defence involves a military alliance against commonly perceived external threats. Most regional security complexes are too polarised to develop alliance behaviour. Usually, collective defence
within regional security complexes takes the form of subregional alliances, such as the case of the GCC within the Persian Gulf sub-complex, or the "confrontation" states within the Middle East complex or the loose and informal forms of military collaboration among the ASEAN states. The chief purpose of such arrangements is to ensure a balance of power within the complex, rather than provide a military shield against an extra-regional threat.

In regional complexes lacking a central or defining rivalry, collective defence against external threats is easier to develop. The collective defence role of the inter-American system under the auspices of the OAS and role of ECOWAS within the West African complex are examples of such arrangements. In these cases, local rivalries among the actors were outweighed by the need to display regional solidarity against potential or actual extra-regional threats.

Even in those complexes where the intensity of mutual threat perceptions precludes the formation of collective defence systems, the possibility remains that the emergence of a new external threats would help to reduce regional polarisation; and that a common aversion to outside intervention may prompt internally-divided regional actors to develop collective defence mechanisms. In this sense, collective defence systems could be an important indicator of change within regional security complexes. There is as yet no example of such interaction, but the settlement of many Cold War regional conflicts could well produce examples in the near future, especially within the Persian Gulf sub-complex (Iranian participation within a collective defence system with the GCC states?).
Structures of alliance within a regional security complexes vary. The GCC within the Gulf sub-complex and the OECS within the Caribbean sub-complex have developed relatively integrated institutions for military cooperation. Many regional groups have been reluctant to opt for formal coordination within the institutional framework because of a concern not to be perceived as an alliance or because of differing threat perceptions. In such cases coordination is undertaken on a bilateral basis among the members most concerned with the threat. The members of ASEAN and the OFLS, for example, keep their military cooperation informal and mostly bilateral.

Patterns of collaboration within collective-defence systems could vary, including information and intelligence-sharing, joint military exercises, creation of joint forces, joint border patrols, weapons standardization, and common arms industry. The objectives of military cooperation could vary, but frequently relate to increased deterrence, confidence-building within the regional group itself, enhanced national readiness and capabilities and increased ability to mutual support in contingency situations. In so far as internal security is concerned, the necessary common measures are not primarily military; but involve coordination of laws and regulations pertaining to immigration, residence and extradition.

But there are several limitations on the collective defence efforts within Third World regional security complexes. Meaningful aggregation of national capabilities is made difficult not only by existing political disputes, but also by differences in weapons, doctrines and procedures in the national armed forces. Differences in
national threat perceptions and capabilities to contribute to the collective defence pool also act as constraints on military collaboration. Military alliances formed on an autonomous basis are deemed useless in the Third World because the latter are not only weak as states, but also as powers. Liska has argued that notwithstanding their pretension to base their security on indigenous collective resources, Third World regional alliances continue to derive security from their association with external powers.\textsuperscript{xxxii} Even the collective resources of regional groups may not be sufficient to deter aggression.

On the other hand, regional cooperation against internal security threats has greater potential to increase the self-reliance of Third World countries. Such cooperation could meaningfully reduce the need for seeking foreign intervention, given that "low-level" domestic threats are the more likely forms of conflict and instability in the Third World than large scale military attacks.

**IV. Conclusion**

Regional security complexes are an increasingly significant feature of the international security milieu. They illuminate the "security dilemma" of the Third World states within a changing international system in which the diminishing "overlay" of systemic pressures (i.e. colonial heritage and the Cold War\textsuperscript{xxxiii}) has brought into sharp focus the essentially localised sources and patterns of conflict as the primary determinants of security. But as the foregoing analysis has shown, while regional security complexes are primarily anarchic,
the anarchy is subject to regulation and manipulation towards order and stability. Factors which promote stability and cooperation within regional security complexes relate to the values of the regional actors (states and regimes), their perceptions of threats to national, state, regime and regional security, and finally their desire for identity and autonomy. These factors are evident in most of the security complexes, either in latent or overt form. They cause the balance between amity and enemity within regional security complexes to vary across different complexes, as well as across time.

The foregoing also identifies the main constraints on attempts to generate stability and collaboration within security complexes in the Third World. These relate to motivation of the regional actors and the sources of polarization and cleavages derived from divergent national interests. In addition, the inferior position of the actors (the Third World states) in the international distribution of power undermine their efforts to maximise autonomy through collaboration.

The paper establishes the need for paying greater attention to the dynamic aspects of regional security complexes that tend to make them stable and collaborative. The various types of motivating factors contributing to stability and collaboration identified in the foregoing analysis are significant and must be incorporated into the conceptual framework of regional security complexes. With a balanced focus on elements of amity and enemity, regional security complexes emerge as a powerful intellectual tool for enriching our understanding of one of the most significant arenas of the international political
system.
NOTES


An alternative (realist) approach to regional security during inter-war and early-post war years was advocated by statesmen like Walter Lippman and Winston Churchill. In this view, regional security would be best attained by the Great Powers of the day who should establish spheres of influence in their respective regions and manage the problems of peace and security. See for example, George Liska's theory of "great power orbits", "Geographic Scope, Pattern of Integration", in Richard A. Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz, Regional Politics and World Order (San Fransisco, W.H. Freeman, 1973), pp.232-46. This approach to regional security was the basis for Cold War alliances, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact, which recognise spheres of influence of the superpower patrons. After the decline of these alliances, regional security was seen to require a policy of mutual restraint by the superpowers in intervention in Third World conflicts. The was most clearly expressed in the US policy of "linkage" which called for Soviet restraint in Third World regional theatres as a pre-condition for improved ties with the US.


v. Buzan, "A Framework for Regional Security Analysis", p. 4

vi. Buzan "A Framework for Regional Security Analysis", p. 8

vii. Buzan's criteria for defining a security complex is problematic in some respects. In his view, security complexes are a group of geographically-proximate actors whose security interaction is no longer conditioned primarily by colonial or Great Power actors ("overlay") and which is marked by a central rivalry between two or more regional actors. Such a criteria would appear to exclude those regional settings where the intensity of security interdependence is indicated by cooperative interaction or by a common quest for regional autonomy.

Thus, two of the distinctive subregional settings in the Third World, Central America and Western Africa are not regarded by Buzan as examples of security complexes. The Central American subregion may not be regarded as a complex because of the overwhelming influence of the US which suppresses the local security dynamic. However, the experience of the Contadora group in finding a settlement of the Nicaraguan conflict in defiance of US pressure revealed a substantial measure of autonomy on the part of the regional actors which justifies the consideration of Central America as a distinct security complex.

The West African region lacks a central indigenous rivalry (like the Indo-Pak or ASEAN-Vietnam rivalry), and as such may not be regarded as a security complex if Buzan's criteria is strictly applied. Yet patterns of security interaction among the West African states is no less intense, although this intensity is manifested in collective problem-solving through the mechanism of the Economic Community of West African States, rather than in the form of a central rivalry. The ECOWAS' role in the Liberian civil war revealed a close and positive pattern of interdependence among actors which would justify the label of a security complex.

Thus, while an intense rivalry may influence and sharpen the pattern of security interdependence among a group of regional actors, it is not the only condition for identifying a security complex. Other indicators of an "intense interdependence of national security perceptions" such as a strong regional security arrangement (as in the case of ECOWAS), and especially a common desire for autonomy (as in the case of Central America) are equally useful as criteria for defining the existence of a security complex.


ix. Ayoob, "Regional Security in the Third World", p. 20; Buzan, Regional Security, p. 6

x. I William Zartman, "Africa as a Subordinate State System", in Falk and Mendlovitz, eds, Regional Politics and World Order, p. 386

xi. Edward Azar and Chung-in Moon, National Security in the Third
Such methods for pacific settlement of disputes are common in regional organisations in the Third World. Examples include the OAU's Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration and the OAS' Commission of Investigation and conciliation and the Arbitration tribunal. On the other hand, some organisations, such as ASEAN and GCC, while providing for similar institutions, have avoided making use of them and chosen to resort to informal discussion, mediation and accommodation. These emphasize conflict-prevention; the very need to use of formal mechanisms for conflict-resolution is regarded as an indicator of the limitations of regional cooperation.


David Dewitt and Gabriel Ben Dor, "Conflict and Conflict Management in the Middle East", in David Dewitt and Gabriel Ben Dor eds., Conflict


xxviii. As a prominent Nepalese scholar puts it: India's size and overwhelming impact on South Asia, and the necessity of its participation in any regional grouping tend to be mutually exclusive", Lok Raj Baral, "SARC, But No "Shark": South Asian Regional Cooperation in Perspective", Pacific Affairs, Vol 58, No. 3 (Fall 1985), p. 422.


xxxii. Buzan's concept of "overlay" focusses on the exapnsion and adaption of the European states system and its sovereignty-anarchy problematique as a result of European colonial exapnsion. But in the
context of security complexes in the Third World, it would be appropriate to consider the systemic competition between the US and the Soviet Union as a form of "overlay" as well, because of its pervasive impact in encouraging regional conflicts and otherwise influencing the regional security milieu in the Third World.