

【論説／ Articles】

How Do South Asia's the Small States Behave in the Rise of Asia's Power(s)?

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1. Introduction

The structure of South Asia has started changing along with the behavior of small states in this region after China started playing a hegemonic role in the region. The emerged phenomena lead to a significant theoretical question regarding the cause of small countries' behavioral change. The research would observe how the structural changes affect the behavior of small states in South Asia. There are traditional theories to analyze the behavior of countries. The behavior of a state is analyzed by the relations between the local hegemon(s) and the other small states of the same region. Small countries may play different roles as a neutral-mediator in conflicts, a contributor to peace instead of classical bandwagon (free riding as a group) and balance of power ideas. This research hypothesizes how the traditional theories of international politics explain the behavior of the small states in South Asia, considering China and India are two dominant regional powers. Simultaneously, the research intends to find out the best way to explain small states' behavior of the region to apprehend the system of South Asian politics.

This study goes through the existing studies and argues that the reason most of the South Asian small countries behave in a particular way is different from the way examined by the existing studies. This study does

not disagree with the argument that most South Asian countries are not part of China and India's bandwagon or balance of power game (Paul, 2018; Sridhanp, 2011; Khondoker & Zaman, 2020). Some existing researches consider that Pakistan is maintaining the balance of power against India, which facilitates the influence of China. Therefore, this study does not concern Pakistan while arguing that the majority of the countries are neither part of the balance power game nor bandwagoning. This study argues that other small countries are refraining themselves from being a part of the bandwagon and balance of power because of a bipolar structure in South Asia. One reason could be that, except Pakistan, the other South Asian countries are not receiving any direct threat from either India or China. Instead, both of these countries are in an attempt to attract small states to it, as Hurrell clarified in the fourth point on how large countries maintain good relationships with small countries (Hurrell, 1995). However, classic bandwagon or balance of power tend to elucidate security issues. Based on security issues, scholars focused their studies on India and Pakistan's rivalry that exposed Pakistan's engagement with the extra-regional power, that is, China. Scholars also explained how other small countries like Himalayan states (Nepal and Bhutan) in South Asia were polarized centering on Indo-Pak rivalry (Chatterjee, 2014). Buzan's argument also primarily focused on the Indo-Pak conflict pointing out that the bipolarity is shifting to unipolarity because Pakistan is getting weaker and India, on the other hand, is growing stronger (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Buzan, 2011). This research does not agree that Indo-Pak contention helps a lot to understand the other small states' actual position in the region. Some researchers attempted to understand South Asian politics without bringing up the cliché of the Indo-Pak conflict. Wagner, a scholar of South Asian politics, also attempts to analyze South Asian politics focusing on China and India duel instead of the Indo-Pak bubble

(Wagner, 2016; Freeman, 2018). Wagner's central proposition depends on the rivalry of two regional hegemons in the region, while Freeman argues that the Indo-China conflict could be minimized, and cooperation could be facilitated through more engagement in regional institutions. That being the case, neither of them seemingly pays much attention to the behaviors of the small countries in South Asia. However, some scholars also tried to figure out how the small countries of South Asia behave considering China as rising power while India is considered as regional power here by default. Their focal argument is that China offers small states a lot more than they used to have, which also provides them a bidding power to maximize the offers from other hegemonic actors (Paul, 2018; Khondoker & Zaman, 2020).

All above-mentioned existing research deals with security, trade and economics, international societies, organizations, and so on, which are undoubtedly significant to understand countries' behavior, either large or small. It is also true that when small countries are in a steady situation and have confidence, willing to contribute in the international arena in some way and expect respectful status that is regarded as status-seeking behavior as small countries, like Singapore, Denmark, Norway, and so on are well known in status-seeking business. Accordingly, this research finds that the small countries in South Asia are engaged in status-seeking behaviors that were not dealt with in existing literature.

2. How to define small states

There are many pieces of literature attempting to define small states. It is not possible to find a unanimous definition from the arguments in the works of literature. That is why it is better to conclude all debates in a way so that all the small states can be defined by either tangible variables such as population, area, economy, military power, location, and so on, or

psychological variables such as security or roleplaying in the international arena. Before determining South Asian small states, the study requires looking into the scholarly debate on defining small states in general. It has been said that concrete variables are unambiguous enough to separate small states from their large counterparts. But the problem is that there is no specific definition for small states that is universally agreed upon. Consequently, debate keeps progressing even in a single variant. For instance, if the variable is the population size, this drives us toward a labyrinth because the number of the population is not generally accepted. Scholars' arguments make a labyrinth in defining small states.

This study considers 'population size' as the first criteria in the discussion procedure because it illustrates the clear idea of the countries. David Vital also recommended that the size of the population appears to belong in the clear and unambiguous category (Baehr, 1975). According to Vital, if an economically developed country holds 10-15 million citizens and an under-developed country has 20-30 million citizens, in either situation, countries are considered to be small (Vital, 1967). Vital's idea of defining a small country faces challenges from many other scholars who also attempted to define small states by the population size, such as Simon Kuznets, Eswar S. Prasad, and Ayhan Kose. According to Kuznets, a small state holds a population from 5 to 15 million (Kuznets, 1960). On the other hand, 41 developing states among 184 member states have a population from 1 to 1.5 million, according to Prasad and Kose (Prasad & Kose, 2002). The concept of "Commonwealth" defines small countries with 1.5 million people or less.

Other scholars claim that area of the states is the main variable to define a small or large country. According to United Nations Organization, a small country is supposed to be smaller than 100,000 km². In fact, some other scholars have made an argument that a state's landmass is in fact 'irrelevant'

to the question of size (Daniken, 1998). Scholars like Karl Deutsch define a small state by GNP of a country. According to him, if there is a state with less than 1 percent of the world's total GNP, the state should be considered as a small country (Baehr, 1975).

The above discussion is based on some criteria (size of the people, land area, and GNP of a country) that are quantifiable. Quantifiable data always gives clear visibility of features that is easy to comprehend. Hence, it helps figure out the size of the features and easily analyze them. The population, landmass, and GNP data distinctly differentiate large and small states, though there is no consensus among the scholars. Many scholars, however, are not satisfied with tangible or quantifiable data. They argue that quantifiable data might figure out the small size states but does not articulate the complexity that small states face when they behave in international relations (Maass, 2009).

Apart from the numeric data, some other concepts help scholars define small states in terms of security, the capability to make a difference and behavior in the international system, dependence, and so on. Robert L. Rothstein defines small states based on security. According to him, small countries do not rely on their own power for their safety, and also, they are not capable of ensuring their security by themselves. Instead, they always prospect aid from different outside sources (Rothstein, 1968). Basically, David Vital and Rothstein argue for how to define small states. Keohane agrees with Rothstein's argument and explains that some weak and inefficient countries make no difference in the international system. Leaders of those countries also contribute nothing to the system. According to Keohane, these are small countries, and these small countries are "system-ineffectual" (Keohane, 1969). Small states are always blamed as weak states because of their security incapability and dependence on outside sources (such as

large states, organizations, institutions, and so on). However, they fulfill all requirements for statehood (Olafsson, 1998).

Hence there comes another criterion called power because weak states always lack the power to apply either to protect themselves or to resist other states from applying to them (Fox, 1959). Considering the power and security discussion, small states come with weakness because small states have kind of no significance to exert on world politics (Hanggi, 1998). Hanggi's argument is a kind of reflection of Keohane's "system-ineffectual" concept. Actually, Keohane applies a brand-new argument instead of the traditional way of defining based on quantifiable data like size, population, and so on or security capability, that is if a country is capable of maintaining its own security using its own resources. He, instead, offers states' roles in the international system and discovers that different states play certain types of roles in the system based on their capability. In the role-playing, a state can shape or dominate the entire system, or can exert substantial influence on the system by its unilateral or joint action with others, or can employ its significance along with others, but separately it can do nothing or can do little with the influence coming from outside and gets affected. Keohane termed these four types of states consecutively "system-determining states", "system-influencing states", "system-affecting states", and "system-ineffectual states" (Keohane, 1969). Keohane does not doubt that the system-influencing countries are large or great power countries, and also system-ineffectual countries are obviously small countries. In almost every situation, small states always face capability questions if they manage the international system proactively. Clive Archer, Alyson J. K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel also define that small states avail few possibilities within the continuing framework of the international system. According to them, small states do not dare to threaten to quit, alter or destroy the

institutional structures in the current system. Therefore, small states' strategic challenges always vary from those of great powers' (Archer, Bailes & Wivel, 2014). Nevertheless, it seems to have a lot of a grey area between system-influencing states and system-affecting states, lacking a clear boundary between the two types. Not only that, but the problem also rises with the states which are not small but cannot say large at the same time (Baehr, 1975). However, Keohane mentioned them as secondary and middle power/country.

The above discussion concludes that there is no specific criterion about small states whether the criteria are based on quantifiable data from material aspects or different concepts from psychological aspects. Basically, the definition that attempts to define small states with quantifiable data serves concrete concepts. On the other side, the psychological criteria are mostly relative because it always leads to a comparison between or among the states (Radoman, 2018). Now the question arises which criteria are the most suitable to adopt for defining the small countries in South Asia that also help to explain the behavior of small countries in South Asia. Researchers argue over which criteria to choose from population size, territory size, national income, available natural resources, or one from various psychological concepts.

All these different definitions were viewed from various perspectives. As Fukuyama brought up, the term 'small state' has no certain meaning, resulting in various references of small countries based on perspectives (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 22). So it is obvious that there is a gap to think the term "small state" differently. Apart from these, there are also some other ways to think countries small or large. In general, we understand by small state, simply the states those are neither so large nor so powerful. Comparing between or among the countries in a region to define small and large is

not as black and white. There are also expressions like 'smaller than' or 'larger than'. One perspective can lead one researcher to find a small country in a certain way, but another perspective may lead another researcher to understand differently (Rapaport, Muteba, and Therattil, 1971). Therefore, arguments referring to the small state may come from many sides, such as international, regional, or national perspectives. It is also necessary to consider that nothing is wrong or uneven in the arguments.

2.1. Small States in South Asia

According to the quantifiable criteria, no country in South Asia is small except Bhutan and Maldives (table-1). Misra, a South Asian expert, also mentions in the same way (Misra, 2004). Because the population of both the countries is below even 1 million, which is the lowest criteria proposed by Prasad and Kose, on the other hand, the population of other South Asian countries is above 20 million that is the criteria set by Vital. But Vital mentioned 20-30 million population if the country is underdeveloped, while 10-15 million for developed states. Based on the upper limit population criteria, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are in between because the population of all three countries is between 20-30 million. Thus, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan do not fit in the definition of a small state. Based on the landmass criteria set by the United Nations, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka fit perfectly in the small state definition because all the three countries are less than 100,000 km². **Table 1** shows the quantifiable data about South Asian countries.

So apparently, there is no way to term Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan as small states. But it is not surprising that researchers concerning South Asia are not convinced to term those three countries as large states except India. Gowher Rizvi also did not mention those three countries as large countries.

Table 1: Quantifiable data about South Asian countries

Country	Area (km ²)	Population in 2019 (in million)
China	9,600,013	1,433
India	3,287,259	1,366
Pakistan	796,100	216
Bangladesh	147,570	163
Afghanistan	652,860	38
Nepal	147,180	28
Sri Lanka	65,610	21
Bhutan	38,390	.76
Maldives	300	.53

Source: World bank data and World Population Prospect 2019

His analysis clarifies that Bangladesh could be treated as a large country considering the population criteria and comparing with Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. But the analysis prioritized the psychological fact taking into account that Bangladesh is geographically located next to India (Rizvi, 1986). This study applies the same argument on Pakistan that proposes it as a small country considering the psychological fact that it is also located next to India, a giant country in terms of population and landmass in South Asia.

Besides, this study counts on another way to define small countries in South Asia as Keohane's argument does, looking into the entire international system. Keohane's analysis inspires this study to consider China and India as system-influencing and Pakistan as system-affecting. There is another perspective in Keohane's argument that this study also signifies to keep in mind. The third quarter of the 20th century led him to term the United States and the Soviet Union as a system determining states or great power states (Keohane, 1969). However, the collapse of the Soviet Union or the new set up of the 21st century would unquestionably make him designate in

a different way that would perfectly represent the present structure of the political world; for example, the United States is the sole system-determining state, China is more than system influencing, and India would perfectly fit as system influencing without doubt, though he had kind of indecision at that time. This study makes arguments about South Asian countries considering the regional perspective deduced from Keohane's statement. China has some visionary plans that inevitably include South Asian countries from a regional perspective. To make the proactive plan happen, China intends to shape the regional system in a new way. But in counterweight, India, along with Japan and other world power, is trying to uphold the traditional system where India was considered the major actor here. Apparently, the two main actors are playing determining role actively to shape the system and structure of South Asia, which are China and India. Bangladesh and Pakistan could be considered as design influencing states or secondary powers. Afghanistan and Nepal could be termed as systems affecting states or middle powers. And finally, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka must be labeled as ineffectual system states or small powers. According to Keohane's argument, these are the countries that have nothing to react against the visionary plans of determining states that lead them to either accept or just stay quiet. In other words, considering India and China at the center of the hegemonic role-playing game, this study thinks rest of the countries in South Asia, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan (even though having nuclear power), and Sri Lanka as small countries. The following sections will explain how the South Asian middle power countries behave and if there are any other choices for the small states to behave rather than just not playing any role in the system.

3. Conventional thoughts of countries' external behavior

Many factors could work as catalysts for the states to act or behave in the internal arena. Theorists of different schools of thought in different times debated, and even the debate is still in progress that what is/are a factor(s) behind the external behavior of the countries. It will not be an exaggeration to say that small countries mostly get neglected in the analysis of the Realist school. Realist theorists have seen the small states struggling for survival. Besides, they have barely seen any material elements in the small states that may exert any influence on the international system. Those are the reasons why theorists brought the great powers to the epicenter of realist studies (Schweller, 1997). Some theorists acknowledge that small states in some regions, especially Europe, had shown some role to the international system in the post-Cold War. But the small states have lost their minimum appeal in the global system, though the majority of the world population live here. The realist trend opines that power is at the center that states seek, like human nature. In that run, great powers belong in a forward position to hold the power that helps them gain international interest like security and protect their survival in the chaotic global system (Rosenau, 1969). The prominent two neo-realist trends, defensive and offensive, also analyze the behavior of great countries considering their so-called power. The defensive trend focuses on preserving the status quo of great power by the balance of power (Gilpin, 1981), while the offensive trend finds the way of behavior to uphold the security of great states for survival through power increasing (Mearsheimer, 2001). The above discussion leads to conclude the thought of neo-realist schools that either power or security is the factor that determines the behavior of states. Therefore, neorealists believe in relative gain. Because in an anarchic situation where there is no central authority, small countries

are constantly in fear of being deceived and threatened during interaction with large counterparts. Moreover, small states having a small amount of material power can a little or cannot influence the international system. Also, small states' contribution is too little in the relative gain process. That is why the realist-trend has focused a little on small countries and their behavior. But many other theoretical traditions argue that having a small amount of material power does not demonstrate that the small countries have no power. Small countries might rather possess different sort of power that may help them play a significant role in the international system (Rothstein, 1968).

Based on the analysis approach, both realism and liberalism hold different views. Liberalism argues that external behavior relies on the internal environment of the countries. Various actors such as individuals, lobbies, and institutions like multinational corporations lead a state to behave in the international system. On the other side, according to realism, the international system shapes the state's external behavior (Rittberger, 2004).

Like neorealism, neoliberalism is also constructed based on the Lakatosian model with three elements; international anarchy in shaping states' behavior, states as the most important actors in world politics, and states as a self-interested entity. However, neoliberalism does not recognize that anarchy alone shapes states' behavior. For them, states behave pursuing their interest under anarchy which is constant. Liberalism argues that there are always a few common interests, mutual interest, from trade to environmental protection among the nations that spur states to shape the external behavior. Neoliberalism comes up with the idea of international society and acknowledges the importance of the existence of international society. Neoliberalism, instead of military power, considers that it is the international institution, democratic value, and interdependence those

shape state's behavior. States certainly come together in the cooperative construction and maintenance of the functional institution. According to neoliberalism, the various constraining effects of anarchy can be mitigated through international institutions that set agreements, norms, and principles to raise the cheating cost, lower transaction costs, and increase information access. This way, states' behaviors toward cooperation become facilitated under anarchy. When states establish any international institution, especially regional institution under anarchy, the hegemonic country or countries play/s a significant role that serves the small states less than the hegemonies. Under the presence of hegemony, the odds of a zero-sum game through enhancing relative gain become more densified in the long run. As a result, small states show little interest in regional institutions.

It is true that theorists of different schools cannot deny that the international institution, democratic value, and interdependence worked in many regions like Europe or ASEAN. But also fact that they did not work in many other regions like South Asia. Neither the regional institution nor democratic value has tightly tied them together, though SAARC, which is almost inactive, was supposed to serve as the regional institution here. Besides, democratic value did not add additional value to interdependent behavior as neoliberalism believes in absolute gain. To achieve the absolute gain, states did not show such strong and versatile initiatives; SAPTA, SAFTA, and BBIN were initiatives, but there is no high hope because of procrastination in decision-making and lack of states' goodwill.

As mentioned earlier, according to neoliberalism, states come together in the cooperative construction and maintenance of the functional institution, but their identities and interests are not shaped or constituted by social interactions. Constructivism rejects all the thoughts brought up by both realism and liberalism and argues that the external behavior of the states

is determined by national interests derived from states' identities and political leaders' ideas (Viotti, 2012). State identity defines the priority interests that determine the state behavior and drive the state actors to act accordingly. Besides, "ideas" about the shape of the best system of the state and the "purpose" of the state help state-leadership outline the state behavior towards international challenges, threats, security, and so on to achieve the goal in the international system as an effective regional or active international actor, holding neutrality or allying with other powers (Mingest, 2011).

Also true that the number of small states has been increasing after World War II and the fall of the Soviet Union. After the Cold War, the increased number of small states are recently enjoying more freedom to speak and contribute more in the international forum. In many cases of global issues, small countries are getting together and raising their voices. The interdependence of small countries shapes to work as united, producing some kind of power that shapes small countries' behavior as well (Long, 2017). Small states with comparative limitations in material power can play a majority role in every international forum they are engaged in.

4. External behavior of small states

Before analyzing South Asian small countries' behavior, this study focuses on comprehending whether countries behave stereotypes regardless of size. Realist tradition assumes that countries behave in a certain way obviously based on the particular situation in the international system. On the other side, a scholar like Fox argues that no countries behave in a certain way or stereotype; instead, every country behaves differently (Fox, 1959). Whether states behave in the same way or differently, this proposition allows the research to move a further inquiry into how states may behave. That also

unveils the possibility of more choices that states may act in possible other situations. The matter is that states' behavior could be explained from different aspects, regardless of small or large. That may explain why some schools of thought do not see the importance of small states' behavior, such as the realism trend pays less attention to small states' behavior because small states seem less or no threat to great powers (Simpson, 2018).

Another way to depict the behavior of interacting units is by analyzing the relations between a local hegemon and other small states of the same region. Andrew Hurrell puts his fingers on four points of behaviors of small states, either considering or countering the hegemonic country(ies). First, small states behave as a subregional group in response to a current or potential regional hegemon. Second, the small states get together to manage a regional power to restrict external hegemonic power, which is a potential threat to them. Third, Bandwagoning with locally great power. Small states sometimes tend to get the regional hegemon's company to avoid any potential risk and attack. And fourth, not that small states are always keen on hegemonic power, but the hegemon itself may seek to get involved with the small states looking forward to meeting its greater aim (Hurrell, 1995). Hurrell refers to some specific types of behaviors in an organized way that leads to thinking more of possible behaviors that small states may do than as Waltz, a prominent neorealist, says that behavior of states leads to conditions either balancing or bandwagoning (Waltz, 1979). The defensive school of neorealists thinks that small states tend to adopt the tool of the balance of power to uphold the present status quo because small states are limited with underlying political forces and power deficits (Simpson, 2018).

Both defensive and offensive neorealism always attempted to define the relationship between or among the countries in terms of hierarchical status. Some researchers amid the trends find out a framework where two or more

hegemony belong, induces small countries to act in a particular behavior called neutrality. Neutrality guides countries towards four principles such as 1. Participating in no war, 2. refraining from starting a war, 3. defending neutrality, and 4. not adopting a policy that may provoke a state to a war (Goetschel, 1999).

Impartiality is often characterized for neutrality to not use military force for belligerency in international relations. That constructs a neutral political image in a power-political arena (Joenniemi, 1993). There are three types of neutrality such as 1. Ad hoc or temporary neutrality, 2. De Jure or by law neutrality, and 3. De facto or neutrality adopted without recourse to international law (Simpson, 2018). But there is a strong criticism against small states that a small state can no longer hold its neutrality position in a situation when any of the great powers see any form of security threat there. The realism trend also shows up with another criticism of the state's neutrality, arguing that neutrality is not a fact that lasts longer but rather quickly shifts to a normal state that refers to either bandwagoning or balance of power (Goetschel, 1999).

Sometimes small states ignore the so-called power deficits they have often been termed and demand the stake of contribution to upholding the international system. In that case, small states step to mediate in conflicts or hold the driving position in various issues and crises to contribute to peace and stability. Apart from that, small states are well known as respectful to international principles, norms, and laws. Besides, they are not capable of exercising power that makes small states more credible as moral arbitrators in international affairs (Randoman, 2018). What small states lack in material power as realism always focuses during the external behavior discussion, they more than makeup for by turning as mediators, contributors, or arbitrators. In addition, small states having comparative limitations in

material power can play a majority role in the decision-making process at international forums they are engaged in. That concludes that small states can uphold some potential choices of behaviors in different situations.

There are more other ways states can behave. The way states behave relies on the perspective or varies on different perspectives. Suppose the perspective of states' behavior envisages the systemic role that states play in different ways without any security concern. In that case, that actually leads states to behave in four ways, such as system determiner states that lead to shape the system. System influencer states behave not to shape but influence the system, system affecter that also behaves to influence system with other states because they are seemingly not enough, and system ineffectual behavior shows that states just act as dominated by larger powers (Keohane, 1969). Keohane also mentioned two other behaviors that a great country may either support power(s) or intervene in other power(s) to control international politics (Ibid). Apparently, these types of behaviors mostly go beyond the explanation of realism.

5. Behavior of South Asian small Countries

In the first section, this study attempted to classify the countries of South Asia. Though South Asia consists of eight countries, many more extra-regional actors are actively engaged here, such as the USA having a long relationship with Pakistan. The USA has recently started becoming more engaged with India. Japan also plays a significant role through Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). It is also no more secret that China appears very diligent and active with its visionary goals in South Asia. Because of China's proactive engagement in South Asian countries, it is impossible to keep China out of the box. Besides among the eight countries, India is also proactively engaged in the region. Based on that, this study counts China

and India as tremendous or significant states. Besides, both countries have visionary plans separately that have apparent influence to change or reshape the regional system. Now the question is how the rest of the countries of South Asia will behave in response to the determining activities by the two giant countries. Will they balance powerful actors like India or bandwagon with the most powerful countries like China or vice versa as the realist trend assumes small countries would behave? Or they may act individually according to their convenience? This study tends to explore the given questions to understand the system of South Asia.

This study argues that the international system is too complex to illustrate the behavior of a country that is termed as to behave in a certain way. But this argues that a country might behave differently in different situations because of complexity. Large countries like China or India, as system-determining states in South Asia, do not take part in bandwagoning that is one of the features for small countries either 'to align with an aggressive country to ensure getting not attacked' (Walt, 1987) or 'to stay on the winning side to avail economic gains' (Schweller, 1994), and a small country cannot behave as a system influencer in any way. Small countries like Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka have no capacity to play a system influencing role, except 'bandwagon', 'balance of power', or 'ineffectual on the system'. That is why this research argues that any country considering its position in the hierarchical system can go with different types of behaviors. Again there might be a follow-up question about why states will behave differently, even though they are labeled as the same status.

Every country is moving ahead toward its aim that must be set up differently based on its current situation and circumstances. In the moving case, each state is gradually changing its stands of ideas, norms, narratives, characters, and so on. All countries in the world act or behave based on the

changing motion that requires the state to reach the aim that is already set up. Most cases' changes are so slow that they cannot be viewed either with open eyes or abruptly if the international structure is apparently identical. 'Apparently' in the sense that the change of international structure is also gradually in progress. Whenever the structure changes, the sooner states fit their position in the changed structure and behave that way to achieve the set-up goal.

In a political system, structure works as a nature that means that all changes of states in existing political structure toward further development and power to achieve impeccable security, though gaining impeccable security is unattainable considering the nuclear competition. The idea is based on Greek philosopher Heraclitus who says changes happen all the time, and Charles Darwin, who says that changes concerning development and refinement are evolution. This study takes the idea that every state moves towards changes even a little bit to achieve its set-up target that represents more development that ensures power, security, socio-economic betterment, and so on. In conclusion, states behave on purpose whatever they are doing. Let's look into the South Asian countries, how they respond from a regional perspective, and behave as individual agents.

5.1. The behavior of South Asian Countries as Regional Perspective:

Traditionally, the realist trend believes that small countries' role is confined to either bandwagoning or balancing of power. But the validity of that argument is questionable from the perspective of South Asia. For instance, during the peak time of the Cold War, there were a few countries called NAM countries; they never engaged in either pole. Perhaps this kind of case has been considered as an exception. According to Waltz, the

theory is reluctant or unable to explain the unanticipated event (Waltz, 1990). But this study argues that those kinds of cases are not exceptions in world politics. Rather, they are very regular in the history of the political world. Not only that but the trend of 'small states enjoy no military stress from large countries' has even started during Cold War. Instead of using military forces against small countries, they employ more subtle political coercion or economic pressure (Paterson, 1969). Therefore, the concept of bandwagon and balance of power is not perfectly applicable in many regions like South Asia. Bandwagon and balance of power illustrate the relationship between hegemonic countries of a region in certain ways. This study intends to consider Hurrell's approach of four dimensions to explain South Asia. Analyzing Hurrell's approach, this study keeps in mind that China either should be considered as an external entity in South Asia in the context of history and culture or should no longer be assumed as an outsider because of its magnificent economic and visionary engagement. First, there is no tendency observed in the behavior of South Asian small countries to become unified responding to any regional hegemon; neither India nor China. Rather, India is culturally and historically more connected with the neighborhoods, except Pakistan. There is always perennial tension between the two countries regarding issues like terrorism, unresolved territory, etc. Therefore, Pakistan always seems to be against India, more specifically upholding the balance of power against India. On the other side, neighbors are not being unified against India because of having no such bitter relationship. Moreover, the historic intimacy of small countries with India made this study think of bandwagoning. But true is that those countries have not been threatened to be attacked by India. That is why all countries in the region are dealing with them in accordance with their own interest. Second, it is also true that the small countries of South Asia have seemingly not been

receiving any threat from any outside hegemon like China; therefore, there was no emergency to get together to manage regional power to restrict. The reality is that all the countries of South Asia are proactive to take benefit from China's rise as an economic giant. But it is not like the situation to become part of the bandwagon with China. On the contrary, this study finds that only Pakistan gets along with China to make a strong balanced against India in the region. Third, there was no such situation in history that any country here became a bandwagon of India. But no doubt that except for Pakistan, as explained a little earlier, the good relationship of India with the neighborhoods might create confusion that the small neighbor countries are under bandwagoning. Fourth, Hurrell's last dimension apparently fits with the condition of South Asia; not that small countries are playing the role of either bandwagon or balance of power here, but large countries from outside (China) and inside (India) are looking forward to small countries and getting involved on purpose to serve its greater aim. Such is China's bid with its Belt and Road Initiative project, whereas India, along with Japan, comes forward with another visionary project Asian-Africa Growth Corridor. Both projects bring host countries to the small states with their best bids. Hurrell's final dimension introduces small states with how they can overcome their power deficit and get engaged in playing a different conventional role, neither as a bandwagon nor just the part of the balance of power as neorealist trend forever anticipates. Therefore, this study corresponds with the argument that the small countries in South Asia are not in the debate of states' preference between bandwagoning or balancing (Chatterjee, 2011). Though bandwagon definition has a drive from its orthodox conception, where small countries get attached with powerful countries in terms of security concept, to its contemporary concept, where small countries get connected to thrive by gaining more opportunities as Schweller explained (Ibid). Thus hierarchical

relations turn into a new threshold that is basically for status-seeking. So in the status-seeking process, small countries may act holding not only a neutral position but also a mediator or a contributor. Already three small South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, have been recognized as among the top ten countries contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions. In addition, power rivalry and security competition between the two rising powers in this area also demonstrate the so-called Thucydides' trap. On the other side, it is historically true that small states avoid the possible grounds of conflict with big powers (Radoman, 2018). It is a two-way street to seek status where large states involve in conflict, and small states get engaged in alternative ways. That is why Græger claims that small states are often observed engaged in status-seeking business, while large countries' way is using their resources and capabilities. That way, small countries with resource scarcities and inadequate capabilities try to justify their importance and influence in the international structure, which is not something they could simply demand based on the size of their resources and capabilities (Ibid). Recently, Bangladesh conveyed its neutral position between China and India and expressed interest in becoming a mediator if the situation demands that (Kalerkantha, 2020). Not only Bangladesh but other states also consider themselves in a neutral position.

6. Conclusion

Traditionally South Asian countries were mainly overlooked. Only a few studies are available to understand South Asia. The majority of the existing studies are concerned about India-Pakistan hostility. Some studies postulate that India plays a hegemonic role in the region, whereas Pakistan plays a balance of power role. But the international system is not a static thing, rather always in a moving mood. The scenery of South Asia has started changing

since China's rise with its visionary plan that significantly includes South Asia. That creates a significant shift from the traditional way of thinking. In the contemporary situation, China is another hegemonic actor in South Asia. That shapes a new structural arrangement of bipolar hegemony (China and India) instead of unipolar hegemony (India). Apparently, this structure is supposed to be employed as structural realism expects. But this study observes that structural realism does not underline how other states are reacting or conducting the case. Most of the countries in South Asia are not part of the bandwagon or balance of power except Pakistan. That is why this paper attempted to explore the behavior of other South Asian states that are not part of either bandwagon or balance of power game.

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Summary of an Article in English

How Do South Asia's the Small States Behave in the Rise of Asia's Power(s)?

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According to traditional structural theories, specially neorealism, small states are not influential actors in the international or regional political system. On the contrary, neoliberalist theories based on international institutions, democratic value, or interdependence also do not appropriately adjust in many regions, particularly in South Asia. South Asian countries are still struggling to attain ideal democratic institutions or effective regional organizations. As neither of the large schools of thought satisfactorily explains the behaviors of the South Asian small states, while both China and India are playing hegemonic roles there. Taking that into account, this research argues how South Asian small states should be observed in order to discover a more appropriate way to explain their behavior. To achieve the aim, this research attempts to identify how the small states in South Asia justify the most suitable standard and, secondly, analyzes conventional thoughts of countries' external behavior that leads to discovering the behaviors of South Asian small countries. Finally, this study finds that both China and India cherish the high ambition to become regional hegemonic power that poses the perennial threat of conflict and shapes the region into a bipolar kind of structure which results in more chances for the small countries of South Asia to behave in a more diversified way rather than just to become either bandwagon or the part of the balance of power.